University of Alberta

FEMALE CHARACTERS IN BETTY LAMBERT'S PLAYS

By

ELAINE LE BUKE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

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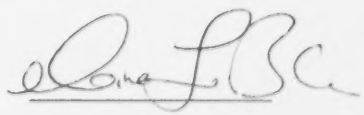

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled FEMALE CHARACTERS IN BETTY LAMBERT'S PLAYS submitted by ELAINE LE BUKE in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in DRAMA.

James V. DeFelice

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M. Dale Wilkie

28 September 1994

DEDICATION

Mom and Dad

Thank you for believing in me and supporting my efforts.
You are my inspiration.

Jackie

Thank you for the encouragement, the laughter, and the kleenex!
You are my heart.

Jim

Thank you for your wisdom, your time, and your kindness.
You are my eyes and ears into the Canadian theatre.

THESIS ABSTRACT

The thesis provides a personal response to and an analysis of the female characters and their relationship to theme in Sqrieux-de-Dieu and Jennie's Story. Lambert stated that she was writing about women who were struggling with their roles, their sexuality and the limitations that these present. The female characters examine their role and sexuality within the context of a patriarchal society and/or institutions. The standards of the society and/or institution designating female roles are rigid and conforming. The thesis will examine how theme is revealed through character.

The thesis identifies, describes and analyzes the development of Lambert's female characters by primarily utilizing the texts of Sqrieux-de-Dieu and Jennie's Story. A plot summary is provided for the text of Under the Skin. Because it is an unfinished work, the plot summary is only meant to confirm conclusions and to provide a comparison.

The thesis is composed of four chapters and two appendices. Chapter One provides a biographical outline, details the development of Lambert's female characters, and explores the origins of Lambert's theme. Chapter Two examines Sqrieux-de-Dieu as a seminal play, wherein the female characters begin to explore the spectrum of female roles and sexuality issues and possibilities. Chapter Three examines Jennie's Story whose focus is on the role of mother, one woman's sexuality and the Roman Catholic Church. Chapter Four is the thesis conclusion in which comparisons and contrasts are made between the female characters and theme in both plays. Appendix One includes a brief biography of Gerard Manley Hopkins and three

of his poems which appear in Jennie's Story. These poems are essential in understanding the themes in the play. Finally, Appendix Two includes part of interview with Bonnie Worthington in which Lambert describes her attempts to create a female tragic form.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO BETTY LAMBERT

> It's hard to sort Betty out. She dramatized her life so highly. She was a woman of great richness, very dramatic, with a tremendous imagination. Her life was like a metaphor for the theatre somehow. What she did in her drama was to take an ordinary event or even a real life extraordinary event and multiply the drama of the experience. This was the way she wrote and the way she lived her life.[1]

Betty Lambert wrote over seventy plays for the stage, radio, and television, several short and long fictional stories and a single novel. She even wrote her own memorial service. Called a "hard-hitting feminist" [2] and a "diamond in the rough" [3] by critics, Betty Lambert died on November 4, 1983, of lung cancer, at the age of fifty. Her legacy is Canadian theatre's best kept secret.

Betty Lambert was born Elizabeth Minnie Lee in Calgary, Alberta in 1933. She was the oldest of three daughters of Christopher and Bessie Copper Lee; a lower-middle class family. She started writing when she was ten and had a poem published by the time she was thirteen. After graduating from high school she moved to Vancouver, British Columbia. In 1952 she married Frank Lambert, divorced him ten years later, and raised her only daughter, Ruth Anne, on her own. By the age of

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[1] Joy Coghill, a personal interview, 14 September 1993.

[2] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983," Canadian Theatre Review 39 (Spring 1984): 6.

[3] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983" 6.

twenty-two, she was writing radio dramas for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). She enrolled at the University of British Columbia in 1953, earned a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and English. After her undergraduate years, she travelled throughout Europe and Mexico, obtained a Canada Council grant to study ancient Greek theatre and represented Canada at a meeting of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People in France. She returned to Simon Fraser University in British Columbia and completed one year of graduate work. In 1965, she was hired at Simon Fraser University as an assistant professor in the English Department, specializing in teaching drama.

Growing up in the Depression was especially hard on Lambert. She decided at a very young age that she was going to be a writer despite the lack of any form of parental support. "I was told [by my parents] that women don't go to University and women don't become writers. Only the rich become writers."[4] She said, "My father died when I was twelve and I was no longer 'working class', I was 'welfare class' and I was determined to get out of that class. Writing was a way out but soon it became more than that, it became a necessity."[5] She described herself as a "sickly kid"[6] afflicted with asthma so terribly that she was transferred between relatives' residences because she was "too ill to stay in (her) mother's home."[7] Due to her illness and

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[4] Bonnie Worthington, "Battling Aristotle," Room of Ones' Own 8.2 (1983): 55.

[5] Dorothy Beavington, "Betty Lambert 1933-1983," (August 1985): 1.

[6] Worthington 55.

[7] Worthington 55.

imposed uprooting Lambert had to finish the remainder of her schooling by correspondence. Correspondence education was suited to Lambert. She loved to read. Reading and writing became an escape from the poverty, social injustice and loneliness that surrounded her in her youth. One has the feeling that Lambert's childhood, lacking in essential love was anything but happy. This impression is revealed by Lambert in a interview with Bonnie Worthington entitled "Battling Aristotle"

> Lambert: It's so hard to reconstruct your past, but I loved books so much and I loved the people that wrote them and I thought that if I wrote, I would be loved...but I didn't have anyone to please. So I had to think in terms of some wonderful readers who would just...see the real me.
>
> Worthington: Sit in their rooms and love you.
>
> Lambert: Absolutely right.[8]

Being an avid reader undoubtedly helped Lambert with her writing skills. When she was seventeen years old, she won a prize for a short story she had written. Shortly after, she was awarded two scholarships to the Banff School of Fine Arts in the creative writing program. Lambert's dream that writing was her way out of "welfare class" seemed closer to reality. It was at the age of nineteen that Lambert started experimenting with the dramatic form. Although Lambert is better known for her stage plays, she got her start on the radio.

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[8] Worthington 56.

> I was working in a radio station and I was writing copy. One of the things I was doing was to extend commercials into monologues that were long involved jokes, that was fun. Later I came to Vancouver and I was working for what is now CFUN writing commercials, and a play contest was announced. Oddly enough one of the judges was Gerald Newman. His wife worked at the radio station and I think she probably put me on to this competition. That was my first play. Later, Gerald told me they refused to give any prizes because all of the plays had been execrable. But he did say that mine had been one of the best ones, and two years later, when he became director at CBC radio, he phoned me up and asked me to write a radio play. And that's how it happened. So I had my first play done when I was twenty-two.[9]

Because the majority of Lambert's radio dramas were written from the late 1950's to the mid 1960's, Lambert had to compete with television for an audience at a time when it was the preferred choice of entertainment. A scant number of Lambert's radio dramas are coming to life again, not on the radio, however. Radio dramas are no longer popular. However, thanks to a collection that appeared in a small, regional magazine, the West Coast Review, Lambert's radio dramas, "The Best Room in the House" (1959), "Falconer's Island" (1966) and "Grasshopper Hill" (1979- ACTRA Nellie Award in 1980 for best radio drama), have rejuvenated interest in Lambert's work. Her contribution to the CBC radio's drama program and the evolving thematic trends in her radio works have been the subject of much recent study. Malcolm Page, who wrote the foreword for the West Coast Review collection stated, "Although radio scripts are often easy to read, a very small number reach print, and this (collection)

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[9] Worthington 56.

serves the neglected art of radio drama as well as the memory of Betty Lambert."[10] Ann Messenger, a colleague of Lambert's echoed this sentiment in an article written in the Dictionary of Literary Biography:

> It is hoped that more will be published when her papers, which include many manuscripts, are sorted and studied, and that a full bibliography of her work will be compiled. Until then no comprehensive assessment or complete bibliography of her work can be made. However even considering only a few published pieces which are readily available and one recent performed unpublished play, one can describe her central concerns and offer some idea of the quality and the power of her writing.[11]

A list of 'other' Lambert radio dramas which appear only in bibliographical references include: "The Lady Upstairs"(1958); "Death Watch (1959); "The Good of the Sun" (1960); "The Summer People" (1961); " The Sea Wall" (1962); "Once Burnt, Twice Shy"(1964); and "The Encircling Island, Sunday Stage" (1972). Dorothy Beavington, one of Lambert's biographers, described Lambert's early radio plays as being "powerful but limited in scope. They deal with small worlds and people with small lives. As Betty grew and began to change her plays began to reflect this growth."[12] Actually, Lambert's early radio dramas provide a foundation in terms of themes which recur in her later stage works. Ann Messenger has suggested that Lambert's themes in her early works were still timely, as late as 1985, when they were

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[10] Malcolm Page, "Three Radio Plays," West Coast Review 19.3 (Jan. 1985): 3.

[11] Ann Messenger, "Betty Lambert," Dictionary of Literary Biography , ed. W.H. New (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1987): 162.

[12] Beavington 1.

published. She explained that Lambert starts to reveal her theme of how "society's sexual mores warp and victimize all these women [who appear in her radio dramas] in turn. Lambert usually creates intellectual, highly 'civilized' female characters who are brought to fuller femaleness and fuller humanity by their relationships with earthier characters, usually male."[13] This development of theme is especially demonstrated in her stage play, Jennie's Story.

When Lambert arrived on the radio drama scene in Vancouver, one of the first people she met was the distinguished Canadian actress Joy Coghill. Coghill was one of the actresses who performed leading roles in Lambert's radio plays. In 1966, Coghill was the director of a children's theatre company called Holiday Theatre and was one of the first directors to commission and actively encourage Lambert to write children's plays for her. This collaboration would prove to be very profitable for both individuals. They would go on to be lifelong friends and professional supporters of one another. Coghill allowed Lambert to produce her works in a supportive, nurturing environment by giving creative and thematic licence to Lambert.

Lambert's first attempt for the stage was a children's play called "The Riddle Machine". It was produced at Holiday Theatre (1966) under the direction of Joy Coghill and is one of the best known and most often produced children's plays in Canada. In 1966, it toured across Canada, and its tour finale was a performance at Expo 1967 in Montreal. It went on to be produced at several American theatres including Jack and Jill Theater in Chicago and Pittsburgh Playhouse in Pittsburgh. It

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[13] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 162.

also had international success at the National Jeudtheater in Belgium. Ann Messenger described "The Riddle Machine" as showing "the conflict between authority and individuality in a futuristic fantasy."[14] Other Lambert children's plays include "Song of the Serpent" (1967). Although this thesis does not deal with Lambert's children's plays, Messenger concludes that issues of sexuality are less evident in Lambert's children's plays, and that "Lambert never condescends or preaches to children, as she never simplifies for adults her sense of the unresolvable conflict at the heart of the human condition."[15] Malcolm Page noted that Lambert's children's play, "pioneered the introduction of serious subjects, instead of fairy tales. Told that the two taboo topics in works for children were sex and violence, she proceeded to write about both."[16]

Lambert showed great flexibility as a writer, being able to work successfully in many media. She continued to write short and long stories and poems while freelancing as a television script writer. She always seemed to have a project waiting, although she stated that she was never able to support herself exclusively by writing. The majority of her television work was done at CBC Television in Vancouver, although some of this work was produced in Toronto and Montreal. Some of her television works include "This Side of Tomorrow", CBC, (1962); "Prescription for Love", CTV, (1965); Return of A Hero", CBC, (1967); "When the Bough Breaks", CBC, (1971); "The Infinite Worlds of Maybe", CBC, (1977); "Brooks", CBC, (1978);

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[14] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 163.

[15] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 163.

[16] Page 3.

and "Nobody Knows I'm Here", CBC, (1978). Dorothy Beavington described Lambert's television plays generally by saying that "[they dealt] with larger issues and more controversial ones such as rape and abortion [than her radio plays]."[17]

During the 1970's, members of the women's movement, primarily in the Vancouver area, were upset at Lambert's perceived views on female sexuality and specifically at Lambert's novel Crossings (1979). Vicky, her central character, is searching for herself. She falls intensely in love with a physically and mentally abusive man but continues the relationship because she finds herself irresistibly attracted to him sexually. Ann Messenger observed that "despite the suffering and the inevitable ending of the relationship (that occurs in both Crossings and the radio play Grasshopper Hill), these are both love stories."[18] These were not the heroines that the women's movement wanted to encourage or establish as role models for their daughters or other women in similar situations. They felt that Lambert was doing an injustice to all women by exploring this character's choice in life. In contrast, Messenger noted that

> The violence, the sexuality, the crudeness, potentially destructive, are primarily constructive and fulfilling for the women in these works [radio dramas, short stories and "Crossings" written between 1966 -1980]. Lambert seems to be saying that a woman is truly alive only when she accepts in herself and in all humanity the impulses that her culture suppresses and denies."[19]

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[17] Beavington 1.

[18] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 162.

[19] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 162.

Jenifer Svendson echoed this sentiment in her article entitled "Betty Lambert 1933-1983".

> ...hardly the stuff role models are made from, but all too real none the less. All Betty's women are real, [sic] disquietingly so. All too often they show us parts of ourselves we perhaps would rather not see... [Lambert] really didn't care whose toes she stepped on. If she had something to say, she was going to say it - and in her own way.[20]

Although a prominent feminist bookstore in Vancouver was banning the novel, other feminist bookstores in the country were championing it. Joy Coghill feels that the women's movement misunderstood Lambert's intentions and that Lambert was trying to poke fun at relationships. Lambert's writings present life as she sees it with all of its warts, and in the end, celebrate the union of males and females. The dissenting feminists never saw the novel as a celebration and as a result Lambert continued to be ostracized by the community. What Lambert achieved, according to Coghill, was to bring ordinary Canadian life beyond life itself. She took life and made it more vivid. She was ahead of feminists in a sense because feminists have not always given women choices in determining their role, whereas Lambert allows her female characters to have this choice.

In the "Battling Aristotle" interview with Bonnie Worthington, Lambert confirmed that "what I've been writing about is women who are struggling - struggling with their sexuality, with their role and maybe with the limitation of their role."[21]

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[20] Jenifer Svendson, "Betty Lambert 1933-1983," Kinesis (Dec./Jan. 1983-84): 26.

[21] Worthington 58.

Lambert was continually questioning her own sexuality, its role and its limitations. "I've always had trouble feeling free to express what I truly believe in. My anger deals with being a woman and being raised to believe my sexuality was dirty."[22]

When asked if she started writing a play with a character, a specific situation or a theme in mind, Lambert explained, "really I start out from a problem that I'm having. Then I extrapolate that into characters."[23] Lambert wrote from personal experiences or events that were occurring around her. These events affected her emotionally. She embellished the drama of these situations and characters. In the Worthington interview, Lambert discussed the traditional roles of female characters, differentiating them from traditional male roles and she explored the function of these female roles in dramatic structure. Worthington suggested it was difficult to write plays that had several interesting female characters in them, probably because drama is about action and conflict. Those who participate in the action are the male characters. Traditionally, action, not introspection, sells tickets or is considered interesting. "The women are there, but they tend to be the supporters or the blockers of some male action."[24] However, in Lambert's plays, the male characters are supporters or blockers of some female action/choice. This does not mean that female characters choose to abandon their traditional female roles. Even in traditional comedies "...the women get

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[22] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983" 6.

[23] Worthington 59.

[24] Worthington 57.

married. And that's the happy ending for the women."[25] Traditionally, "men do things and women attach to what men do."[26] Lambert previously stated that she thought there was a development in her works where women

> ...went from bitches to co-opted women to more likeable, admirable, stronger women...I really thought that if I looked back, I would have found myself having been co-opted, because I know that I had all the cunt hatred that women are taught to have about other women. For example, I had been taught to despise my mother, I had been taught to distrust any other woman: you could be her friend up to a point, but if a man got involved in the situation, she would betray you absolutely. I was taught to despise my own - what I saw as weakness - which was sexuality....But I've been looking through my old work, and that isn't coming through at all....What I've been writing about is women who are struggling - struggling with their sexuality, with their role and maybe the limitations of their role, but not weakness...I thought that if I looked back, I would find that I had been co-opted by the male-dominated literary system or model, and it's just not true. The plays seem really concerned with women relating to each other. That's always been my major focus.[27]

Lambert also questioned her role as a woman playwright and the limitations of that role in the Canadian theatre. "They [male directors and producers] told me 'you're a diamond in the rough, you have intuition. Don't worry about the philosophical meanings in your plays.' I took their advice and got the dialogue and characterization down but not the implications. It took me a long time not only to stand behind what I

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[25] Worthington 57.

[26] Worthington 57.

[27] Worthington 57.

was saying but also to say it very carefully."[28] In 1982, Rina Fraticelli prepared a report for the Status of Women Canada entitled, "The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre." This was a national survey, commissioned by the government, of 1156 productions at 104 theatres in Canada between 1978-1981. Fraticelli reported that

> ...the theatre industry is male-controlled, and the domination of men in each particular area of power and authority greatly increases the likelihood that they will dominate in the next. The preponderance of men on the boards of directors of theatre influences the selection of plays written by men, and the engagement of male directors to direct them. And plays written by men are far more likely to feature roles for male performers. All of this describes an aesthetic which excludes the experience of women. This makes it virtually impossible for women theatre artists to (literally) see ourselves in positions of authority and responsibility and this formal, objective exclusion becomes internalised. The exclusion of women's contribution from the cultural bank negates and undermines the version of reality which is actually lived by the women who comprise the vast majority of Canadian theatre audiences. Thus an internalised, perhaps unconscious, sexism becomes culturally-encoded and institutionalised. This is called systematic discrimination.[29]

The report also showed that only about 10 per cent of the available roles for women in the Canadian theatre, such as Playwright, Artistic Director, and Director are held by women, that the majority of graduate students in theatre departments are women, and that women tend to dominate the amateur community theatre ranks, mostly in volunteer positions. Kate Lushington, the author of the article "Fear of Feminism:

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[28] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983" 6.

[29] Kate Lushington, "Fear of Feminism:Notes Towards the Diagnosis of a Curable Malaise," Canadian Theatre Review 43 (Spring 1985): 8.

Notes Towards the Diagnosis of a Curable Malaise", which appeared in the "Canadian Theatre Review" in 1985, noted that,

> The report was devasting in its findings and inspirational in its recommendations. One might have expected a public outcry, demanding that affirmative action and equal opportunity programmes be immediately implemented to redress the serious imbalance in the cultural life of the nation. No such luck.
> The silence which greeted the release of the report was (and has remained) deafening.[30]

Among the 10 per cent of women playwrights who were produced during the time period of this report, "Lambert is one of the foremost among that select group. "[31]

Lambert's contribution to the theatre was abridged. This is not due because of lack of popularity nor some problems with male directors or producers, and certainly not because she grow tired of the stage. Her life in the theatre was concluded as a result of a terminal illness. Lambert was diagnosed with cancer in 1982. According to Joy Coghill, Lambert showed enormous bravery in her death. Betty was politically committed, fighting for rights and outcomes that she felt had to be fought for. In her usual manner she faced her cancer bluntly. She was going to do everything in her power to overcome cancer and this meant chemotherapy, medications, psychotherapy sessions, and herbal concoctions. Another way she chose to fight it was to continue to write both personal day to day accounts and longer pieces on her feelings about her situation, personal, revealing letters to her close friends, and her last and most powerful play. Her lung cancer had actually gone into remission and everyone thought

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[30] Lushington 9.

[31] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983" 7.

that she had "cured herself". However, after a short while, Lambert started to get severe headaches and her worst fears were confirmed. Cancer had spread to Lambert's brain and eventually caused her to spend her last couple of months blind. She consequently needed constant care. Coghill visited Lambert every day. She remembers, "We never laughed so much - shared so much. Although her life was so dramatic, Betty was unable to dramatize her dying. She couldn't see it."[32] Coghill described a game that Lambert's sister, Dorothy, and Dorothy's husband were playing with Lambert before she died. "It was a participating kind of game where they were remembering the past, and the question was asked, 'What do you think is the most important thing that the world needs?' To which Lambert responded, 'What we need is more nostalgia."[33] Those would be the last words Lambert wrote.

It is sad that the commerative society that bears Betty Lambert's name has not led to the creation of an archival library on Lambert. In May 1993, The Betty Lambert Society, which operates out of the New Play Centre on Vancouver's Granville Island, had only a single thin file devoted to its namesake. This is startling. The file consists of several photocopied and a few original newspaper reviews and clippings pertaining to Lambert stage plays, some of which are not dated nor is their source identified. It also includes some programmes, some photographs, a few advertising posters, and a study guide. If anything else is available on Betty Lambert through the Society, it is not made readily available for interested parties. It is no wonder there is a lack of

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[32] Joy Coghill, a personal interview, 14 September 1993.

[33] Coghill.

criticism on Betty Lambert. The majority of articles relating to Lambert were published after her death.

CHAPTER TWO

SQRIEUX-de-DIEU

> For years now, figuring out one's relationship to the women's movement has been like figuring out one's relationship to, well, men.... It's been a long while now since the notion of 'Sisterhood is Powerful' has been any more relevant than 'Diamonds are a girl's best friend.' What's a feminist to do ? [34]

2.0 Background

Lambert's popular sex comedy Sqrieux-de-Dieu was developed in 1973 under the direction of Pamela Hawthorn, Artistic Director of Vancouver's New Play Centre at that time. It went through several revisions and the final draft was produced at the New Play Centre in 1975. Hawthorn said, "It was a big commercial hit by Vancouver standards in those days, and really marked the beginning of the final phase of Betty's writing for the adult theatre." [35] The play was produced at the Festival Lennoxville in Lennoxville, Quebec (1976) under the direction of Richard Ouzounian and became a smash hit with audience members and critics alike. "Audiences blushed and laughed. Actresses became nationally known stars. Artistic directors queued up to inquire if

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[34] Lynn Darling, "Feminism in Wolf Clothing," Harper's Bazaar (Nov. 1993): 182.

[35] Pamela Hawthorn, introduction, Jennie's Story/Under The Skin by Betty Lambert (Toronto: Playwright's Union of Canada, 1985): iii.

they might produce it."[36] Male critics called it "A nasty play about nice people..."[37], "A triumph of heterosexual smut...A dirty play that also happens to be good clean fun",[38] and a "...send-up of the popular craze for kinky sex stimulants as whips, chains, leather, trapezes, vibrators, unguents and the like...."[39] With tantalizing headlines like these, especially during the sexually charged atmosphere of the seventies, it is no wonder that the play was so acclaimed, albeit all for the wrong reasons. Sqrieux-de-Dieu is not about sex although critics and reviewers would like you to think otherwise. The advertising and the biography on this play is misleading.

Sqrieux-de-Dieu is about sexuality - women's sexuality. It is about five women searching for or embracing, their sexual identity, their choices in roles as women, and the limitations of those roles. These female characters are trying to find their perfect fit within the spectrum of the available traditional female roles: the wife, the mother, the mistress, the whore, the virgin. However, at a time when few Canadian playwrights were writing successful comedies Sqrieux-de-Dieu offered the adventurous audience member a refreshing break. Although this play is heavily sexually charged, the main focus of this play is the exploration of the roles available to the women, the struggles

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[36] Ann Messenger, "Betty Lambert's Sqrieux-de-Dieu," Canadian Literature 85 (Summer 1980): 166.

[37] Bob Allen, rev. of Sqrieux-de-Dieu by Betty Lambert. Sqrieux-de-Dieu (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1976): n. pag.

[38] Jamie Portman, rev. of Sqriuex-de-Dieu by Betty Lambert. Sqrieux-de-Dieu (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1976): n. pag.

[39] Myron Galloway, rev. of Sqrieux-de-Dieu by Betty Lambert. Sqrieux-de-Dieu (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1976): n. pag.

associated with the rigors of these roles, and the choices these female characters make in regards to their chosen role.

2.1 Story

Sqrieux-de-Dieu takes place in Vancouver, British Columbia, during the 1970's. The plot revolves around Brenda, Gracie and George with a variety of other lost souls coming in and out of their lives. Gracie, a middle-aged, single, successful corporate lawyer and academic is dissatisfied with her personal life. She feels incomplete as a woman. Her biological clock is ticking loudly and she yearns to have a family. Gracie is having an affair with George, a bored University professor who abhors surprises but loves watching commercials and re-runs on the television because, "they give (him) a sense of security."[40] George, Brenda's husband, prefers Gracie's predictability over Brenda's inconsistency. Brenda, a pseudo-psychotherapist, wife and mother to four children, invites disenchanted members of society into her living room to guide them through various liberating, consciousness-raising, sometimes sexual, experiences. Brenda yearns for freedom from domesticity, the children, her mother, and George. Gracie and George meet at Gracie's apartment every Tuesday and Thursday evening and have been doing so for five years. Their 'meetings' consist of watching T.V, drinking cocktails, and having 'civilized conversation.' George is content with this relationship. Gracie is not. Gracie decides to tell George that she no longer wants to be

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[40] Betty Lambert, Sqrieux-de-Dieu (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1976): 8.

his mistress. She wants to be a wife and mother. Gracie feels she is getting older and has limited biological time left to fulfil the requirements of these roles to her full potential. She wants to try all the roles before she "dies". Gracie tells him, "George, you are going to have to make a choice. I can't go on living like this"(p.36). George really doesn't take Gracie's ultimatum seriously. The opening scene between Gracie and George is full of sexual innuendo and has the light flavour of a dinner theatre comedy. For example, they disagree over who raped whom in the movie that they are watching on T.V.:

GRACIE: You can't exactly call that *rape*, George.

GEORGE: That is called assault with a deadly weapon. Two deadly weapons.

GRACIE: All right, I lose. I always lose.

GEORGE: You never learn. She attacked 'im wiv'er bosoms.

GRACIE: I agree. That's what you call hitting below the belt.

GEORGE: *groaning*. You were thinking of Vivien Leigh. She didn't have deadly weapons like Yvonne de Carlo (p.12).

Other examples of the use of sexual references in this opening scene include Gracie buying a vibrator for George in order to 'bring back the vital fluids to the base of the spine', and frequent references made towards Joey, George and Brenda's son, who never leaves his bedroom and habitually masturbates in his closet. Joey's behaviour becomes a running joke throughout the play and the sexual allusions made in this

opening scene are all talk and titillations but no action. For example, when Gracie tries to initiate sex with George, George ends up backing away. After a long evening of role playing games, which includes Gracie pretending to perform an act of ritualistic killing on 'their' children, George, feeling that Gracie has gone too far this time with her ultimatum, retreats and returns home to his wife Brenda.

Upon arriving home, George finds his wife Brenda leading a group of misfits in a 'bargain basement' psychology experiment called Tactile Discovery. In this exercise one character (Susan) in the group is naked underneath a mound of whipping cream while the others lick off the cream from her body in turn. The purpose of this exercise is "to become aware of all repressed and neglected sensuality in hitherto unsuspected places"(p. 43). After the departure of the students, who include Bunny, a neighbour, Susan, a student of George's, Nelson, a late-hippie, and Francis, their stockbroker, Brenda begins to prepare her big surprise for George. George hates Brenda's surprises. However, Brenda has planned a erotic evening for George. She has bought an S&M outfit, complete with a whip and she chains herself up. Brenda had promised George when they were married that their relationship would never be boring, and she intends to fulfil that promise. George mocks Brenda's sincere attempt to revitalize their marriage which angers Brenda. What was meant to be a fun and tantalizing evening turns into a psychological fist fight. Their resentment for each other spews out of their mouths. George tells Brenda that he resents her because of Joey, their son. It seems that Brenda was enormously pregnant on their wedding night. George has regretted her pregnacy and held it against Brenda for all these years.

George's story telling of his dream wedding night and what really happened on his wedding night is one of the play's funnier segments. For example, as a young boy, George says he dreamt of his wedding night at the top of the Hotel Vancouver in their bridal suite, complete with a "twelve-by twelve, lavishly appointed bathroom, with sunken marble tub and the luxurious towels, and the mirrors on the ceiling"(p.73), ...and a trembling virgin waiting under a "golden brocade bedspread"(p.73). George would put on his silk red pyjamas, leatherette slippers, and a splash of Old Spice. In his fantasy George thinks, "Will I be kind? Will I be tender? She begs me to be tender...But I laugh! Ha ha. Violation! Rape! Ravishment!...She screams for mercy..."(p.73). However, George says that his fantasy wedding dreams were "trampled to death"(p.74) by Brenda. He gives his version of what actually happened on their wedding night:

GEORGE: "My Wedding Night," by George Edward Partington. After an unpretentious but moving ceremony at the South East Burnaby United Church, over my mother's dead body, the bride, wearing a simple yet elegant maternity dress of white organdy, forcibly removed the groom, slightly inebriated, and drove him in her father's '47 Pontiac, slowly down Kingsway to a motel whose name I have mercifully lobotomized from my brain forever.

She (Brenda) starts to laugh as she recognizes her wedding day.

When I sobered up long enough to open my brand new pigskin overnight case, I discovered that the bride's father, a man of soil, noted far and wide in Estevan, Saskatchewan, for his harmless but

> entertaining sense of humour...had cut off the legs of my silk pajamas,...put itching powder inside my red satin dressing gown,... and had fashioned the twisted cord for my waist into a noose for a circumference slightly lower. As for my fold-away leatherette slippers, I found, tucked into the toes, one rather bloated dead mouse and one slightly over ripe...

BRENDA AND GEORGE: Banana!....

GEORGE: ...Undaunted, I went to the bathroom. It was not the bathroom of my boyhood imagination. It was a toilet and a shower....Great spore mushrooms grew in its interstices...(p.75).

Brenda laughs along with George when he details the bizarre events of their wedding until George cruelly states that none of these details "cowed"(p.75) him as much as his wife's naked "protuberance"(p.75) and her wanting to be sexually playful on that night. Brenda has had enough of George's jokes. Brenda tells George that he makes her sick because he is so boring. Brenda goes on to attack George's sexual prowess. George's only defense is to tell Brenda that he is having an affair. Brenda finds this totally farfetched, if not gut wretchingly funny. Who would want George? Upset that Brenda does not believe that another woman would be interested in him, George calls up Gracie and orders her to come over as proof that she exists. Gracie is shocked at this unexpected event and says that she'll be over in an hour. Brenda is both stunned and amused at George's insistence that Gracie really exists. Brenda scoffs at George, decides to conclude the exercise and begins to pick up her array of sex

toys. George has other ideas. He kicks away the key that will release Brenda from her bondage chains and picks up the whip and gives it a great crack. The lights go black.

It is the next morning at the Partington household. Gracie did not come over the previous night. Brenda still assumes that Gracie is George's fantasy woman. Gracie finally arrives at the back door and states that she did not come over last night because she thought it would be better to come over when the children were not around. Brenda is flabbergasted, and at first angry. Brenda states that she has no intention of divorcing George. This confuses Gracie because she had understood, or at least assumed, that George had already discussed divorce with Brenda or why else was she asked to come over? Gracie decides to push onward, showing and outlining the divorce papers that she had drafted for Brenda. This upsets Brenda, not because Gracie is being pushy, but because no one has asked her what she wants out of this deal. Brenda has seen the light at the end of her freedom tunnel. She tells not only Gracie to take George, but also to take her house, her children, her lifestyle, even her mother. Brenda no longer wants any of it. She wants what Gracie has. Since Gracie wants what Brenda has, they decide to swap roles. They exchange keys to one another's places, Brenda calls a cab, and she goes off to become a woman of the world. Gracie inherits the family and the house and immediately assumes her role of mother and wife. Susan will now inhabit the role of George's mistress. Nobody objects to these new arrangements. One, however, is left with the feeling that not a lot has changed, just the players have. Life goes on as it did the day before with everybody fulfilling the expectations of their given roles until the day comes, and it will, that these women

are forced to re-examine their present roles once again.

2.2 The Female Characters

> Lambert was most centrally concerned about the ancient dualism of body and mind and the conflicting demands of flesh, intellect, morality, individual selfhood, and freedom. She was focussed especially on women, for whom the needs of the mind are threatened, undermined, sometimes denied by their dependence on men for the needs of the body, all within a social context that itself represses or disapproves of and thus warps female sexuality and often represses or disapproves of and warps female minds as well.[41]

The minor female characters in the play act as foils for Brenda, the play's protagonist, and round out the remaining choices of female roles within the traditional spectrum. At the beginning of the play, the dramatis personae find themselves in the following roles: Brenda plays the wife; Gracie plays the mistress; Gramma, Brenda's mother, plays the widow; Bunny, a member of Brenda's group, plays the divorcee; Susan, a member of Brenda's group and a student of George's, plays the virgin. By the end of the play they will find themselves in different roles. They represent three generations of women. These female characters are faced with making major life decisions; do they want to remain in their current roles or do they choose to seize the opportunity for change? The female characters are exact opposites in terms of their sexual identities and personalities. They do have something in common. Their current

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[41] Messenger, "Betty Lambert" 162.

roles impede their potential. The female characters now have to choose between their comfortable, safe present situation or a future of hope, possibility, and uncertainty.

2.21 Bunny Flyntton

> What we are calling 'Woman' has to be rethought....it's a hand-me-down that was inherited through our phallic legacy. [42]
>
> -Avital Ronell

In the stage directions, Lambert describes Ms. Bunny Flyntton as a fortyish, "*rather plump, very earnest*"(p.38), very naive housewife, who "*wears a loose Indian dress and headband*"(p.38), and who thinks that a few hourly sessions a month with Brenda will make her a better woman both sexually and psychologically. Although Bunny is considered a minor character, she, too, seeks an external cure for her inadequacies. However, Bunny needs constant affirmation that she is doing the politically correct, feminist thing in terms of her role. For example, she divorces her husband, enrolls in a womens' studies course and attends Brenda's self improvement courses, simply because she has been convinced by an outside force, probably feminist, that this is for her personal progress. Gramma, Brenda's mother, introduces her to George as "Ms. Flyntton. From down the street"(p. 41), to which George replies, "Oh. It's *Ms.* Flyntton now, is it ?" "Oh yes. Ever since she started at Simon Fraser as a mature student. She just got her...divorce"(p.41). Ms. Bunny tries too hard

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[42] Andrea Juno and V. Vale, eds., Angry Women (San Francisco: Re/Search Pub., 1991): 131.

to be something she is not or perhaps does not even understand. She is caught between wanting to be a liberated woman and wanting to be a part of the old patriarchal value system that has been engrained in her since her youth. Bunny does not understand the ramifications of her choices concerning her sexuality or role in life, and much prefers dealing with the external appearances of things as opposed to what lies underneath. This theme of Bunny living on the surface of reality is shown symbolically in the play. For example, Bunny is more concerned about the topping used to cover Susan in the "Tactile Discovery" lesson than the lesson itself.

> BUNNY: I don't know. I wish Brenda'd let me bring my oil and vinegar dressing. This is going to play hell with my carbohydrate count. But I *love* whipping cream! It's so sinful. (p.40)

And when Susan becomes more adventuresome in this exercise, which is intended to release inhibitions, Bunny is upset and says:

> BUNNY: I don't think you're supposed to do *that*, Susan (p.44).

However, Bunny appears to contradict her beliefs when she says to George:

> BUNNY: George, I *wish* you'd come to our group. Really, I know they seem silly at first. But if you just open yourself. I mean, really Brenda's done wonders for me. You wouldn't believe how I've developed (p.47).

Bunny's idea of developing is divorcing her husband. "I divorced Fred. Finally....Well,

I had to really. Fred was stifling my human potential. Or something"(p. 47). Bunny really wants to convince George that Brenda's classes are really beneficial.

> BUNNY: Really, George, I think if you just tried. Once. I know I've become a much more mature person since I started Brenda's group (p.49).

The difference between Brenda and Bunny is that Brenda chooses to change her stifling situation on her own and leads the way to change for herself and others. Bunny naively lets others influence her and therefore never comes to any sort of self awareness. Innocently, Bunny believes that all change, even unspecified change, is for the better but does not fathom why she is changing, only that it sounds reasonable or that others have told her it is appropriate <u>that</u> she change.

> BUNNY: Ah, well, I tell you, it's made such a difference. Before I started Brenda's group I never knew about multiple orgasms... Neither did Fred (p.50).

Bunny's worst fear is that she may be regressing instead of progressing as a woman because as she states, "I'd hate to think I was regressing. Because if I'm regressing, what's the point? I mean, what's the point of all this education and my divorce and everything if I'm not making progress?"(p. 93) Even a dream, which Bunny wants Brenda to analyze for her, suggests that she is struggling with her sexual identity. In her dream Bunny reports that:

> BUNNY: There was this great big tunnel and this huge enormous train. I think it was a CN

> train. And it was going through this tunnel. And suddenly just as the train was coming out of the tunnel, these great teeth from inside the tunnel, these great big teeth came crushing down and bit the train in two...The thing is Brenda, which am I?...The train or the tunnel? (p.91)

Lambert said that she is writing "about women who are struggling with their sexuality, with their role and maybe the limitations of that role, but not weakness."[43] Bunny's dream reflects her struggle with her sexuality. The tunnel that she describes in her dream symbolizes the vagina. The train symbolizes the penis. The teeth from within the tunnel that clap down on the train represents an aspect of her struggle. She has become an aggressive woman controlled by a feminist agenda; she has divorced her husband, and now she attends women's studies classes where the enrollment has traditionally been dominated by women. Bunny's struggle arises when she excludes men from her life in order to pursue female interests; however, can she do without men on a sexual level? This is the question that Bunny is asking herself and she fears that she is regressing because she cannot find the answer. When Bunny asks whether she is the tunnel or the train, she shows that she is unsure whether her present role or identity is more feminine or masculine. She knows that her dream is aggressive, in the sense that the train is crushed, and traditionally men have been the aggressors in society. Therefore she is questioning whether or not she is still feminine because of the assertive choices she is making in the play.

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[43] Worthington 58.

It is because of this lack of self awareness or character growth that Bunny can be considered to be a static character. We learn that Bunny recently changed her lifestyle before the play starts; however, Bunny's identity remains constant. She does not undergo any significant development throughout the course of the play. Hence, Bunny on stage provides comic moments as the audience sees her trying too hard to be something she is not and inflexibly pursuing happiness. Bunny could also be described as a cardboard figure; however, she would be better described as an archetypal female role model than a caricature. Bunny could easily be misinterpreted as the play's weakest female character. Although Bunny thinks she has developed beyond her traditional roles and is on her way to becoming a whole human being, she does not know why or how she has arrived at this point. As a result, Bunny is doomed to a life of frantically memorizing self-help books or searching for an instant cure for her perceived displacement. Lambert shows us, through the use of Bunny, that not all women are the same. Women struggle with their identities in many different ways. These ways are neither correct nor incorrect methods, just different ones. Lambert also shows us that striving for personal growth is admirable. But one must look beneath the surface of all new ideologies and external forces. Perhaps the way of fulfilling one's human potential is best achieved from within.

2.22 Susan

> There are no positive terms for a strong, sexual woman.
> Whore or slut do not equal stud.[44]
>
> -Holly Hughes

In the spectrum of traditional female roles, the character Susan plays the virgin. Susan is approximately twenty years old and is literally the centrepiece at the beginning of Scene Two. Her naked body is draped over a wooden chest and clad in only whipping cream and ketchup, and she looks more like a victim of a tribal sacrifice than a volunteer for Brenda's "Tactile Discovery" exercise. Apparently, Susan was the only member of the group who agreed to take off her clothes for this exercise, and proceeded to do so in a halcyon fashion. Susan is not the pristine, porcelain, powerless virgin figure. She does not fear or dislike sex or sexual activities. Susan is very sexual and is in touch with the powers of her sexuality.

Susan has an alluring, mysterious quality. No other character seems to really know who she is. Even Gramma comments, "She (Susan) just...appeared. Out of the blue"(p.42). At the beginning of Scene Two, all of Susan's actions are pantomimed; however, Lambert's two stage directions indicate that Susan is comfortable with her sexuality. For example:

> *SUSAN tilts her head to look at Nelson and then reaches over to take his hand. She strokes his arm and then, one by one, his fingers, during the next speech* (p.43).

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[44] Juno and Vale 225.

> *SUSAN takes NELSON'S hand and runs it from the gullet to zilch. She then offers it to him. There is no reaction. She then puts his thumb into his mouth. There is a slight reaction from NELSON before he subsides again into contemplation of the beautific* (p.44).

Bunny and George feel that Susan has gone too far with the exercise, and Francis is sickened by Susan's action. This response is ironic considering that the very purpose of this exercise is to rid one of all inhibitions. Susan is the one character who is comfortable with her sexuality and is willing to express it freely. Her whole persona exudes a powerful sexuality. Brenda and Bunny resent Susan for the very quality that they are trying to achieve, and playfully talk of sex or play sexual games while mistaking this for trying to develop and discover their own sexual awareness. Gracie does not meet Susan until the end of the play, and assumes Susan is George's daughter. Gramma has a kinship with Susan, and at one point, the stage directions indicate that "*Her (Gramma's) laugh is rather like that of SUSAN* (p.44). Perhaps Lambert is suggesting that the nature of roles is cyclical. Gramma is at the end of her sexual life, while Susan is at the beginning. Gramma has been through the various roles that Susan will just begin to embark on. Unlike Brenda, Bunny, and Gracie, Gramma and Susan know that sex or sexual things are different than one's sexuality.

When spoken to by the other female characters, Susan answers in one or three word sentences or ignores them totally. She carries on a conversation only when she is left alone with George. Even in these situations, Susan conserves her words choosing them carefully and delivering them in a calm, controlled but somewhat contrived manner. She likes to play a game of control. For example, when Susan first introduces

herself to George, the whipping cream is melting from her now partially visible naked body. Her appearance and straightforwardness makes George uncomfortable. "*Susan gets up on one elbow and holds out her hand to George who must of course take it*" (p. 46).

SUSAN: Good evening, Professor Partington

BRENDA: The shower's just off the bedroom Susan.

SUSAN: (*ignoring BRENDA*) You don't remember me.

BRENDA: You know. Where you were before.

SUSAN: I'm in your class.

GEORGE doesn't know what to do with the whipped cream on his hand. Finally, he licks his fingers.

BRENDA: Just a minute. I'll get some papers so you don't drip on the rug.

She turns and goes to the bookshelves to get some newspaper.

SUSAN doesn't move...[In the meantime, Bunny has interrupted their conversation but neither pays any attention to her.]

GEORGE: (*to SUSAN*) I don't recall you. I'm sorry....

SUSAN: I only went to your first class.

[Brenda now has re-entered with the newspaper]

BRENDA: Yes. Well, time's getting on. I do have

other responsibilities.

SUSAN and GEORGE continue to look at eachother.

BRENDA: Susan. Susan, your whipping cream is melting.

SUSAN *gets up. She walks lightly across the newspapers and down the hall* (p.46).

Because Susan knows that her sexuality makes the other characters feel uncomfortable she gains control over them and the situation. She's purposely being mysterious and playing mind games with George. After Susan has had a shower to rid herself of the sticky whipping cream, she appears "*dressed in jeans, underwear shirt and sandals, and is carrying a bag. The effect is ingenuous. She is not aggressive in any way. Rather, she is self-contained and independent and this, in itself, seems aggressive to the others*"(p.52). Again, Susan and George are left alone to talk. It is somewhat awkward for George because Susan stands quite still and looks at George. Here is a woman who commands attention from a man.

GEORGE: So. You didn't appreciate my lecture.

SUSAN looks at him.

You said you only went to my first lecture.

SUSAN: You were reading from old notes.

GEORGE: But they're very good old notes.

SUSAN remains silent (p.53).

George thinks that Susan hated his lecture because it wasn't spontaneous enough for the younger generation. Susan corrects him by saying that George

misunderstood what she said. She thought George himself was bored with the lecture notes. After stating this Susan leaves "*calmly*" (p.54). The stage directions that define Susan's mannerisms create an image of Susan as a saviour or a soothsayer or some other holy figure; or perhaps, a fairy god-mistress. Susan and George's roles of teacher and student are starting to overlap and completely switch by the end of the play. In the middle of Act Two, Susan unexpectedly shows up at Brenda's house looking for George. Both George and Brenda initially think that Susan is there to discuss George's class, teacher to student. The stage direction indicate that Susan is dressed all in white. When Susan states that this is not the reason for her visit, George playfully teases her about the other possible reason for her visit.

GEORGE: You want me to guess. All right. You've come by to borrow something old and you thought I'd do...You're not on your way to your wedding?... Then why the vestal virgin disguise?

SUSAN: Oh, it is no disguise. I am a virgin.

GEORGE: You're a *what?*

SUSAN: A virgin (p.96).

Of course, George thinks this is a joke that Brenda has created. George can not believe Susan is a virgin, and is flabbergasted.

GEORGE: A virgin. A vestal virgin. A veritable vestigial vestal virgin ! Margaret, come have a look at this....Susan here is the priestess of an ancient fertility cult (p.97).

Even though George mocks her, Susan remains deadly serious and states that after attending George's lectures, "I knew I was going to have to save you....You have been

waiting for me" (p.97). She has taken on the roles of George's saviour and possible future mistress. The role of mistress is now available to Susan because of the role switching of Gracie and Brenda. Perhaps Susan will not be George's willing mistress, but the suggestion remains at the end of the play that this where her immediate future lies. When Susan offers to drive George to work in her Porsche at the end of the play, Lambert makes it clear in the stage directions that the possibility, at least from George's point of view, that Susan will replace Gracie in the mistress role.

GEORGE: And uh, Gracie? Keep it warm for me. I may be a bit late. I have this...

GRACIE looks from GEORGE to SUSAN and back to GEORGE. She completes his line with him.

GRACIE: Meeting.

SUSAN exits.

GEORGE crosses and pats GRACIE on the bum, He goes out to the patio, picks up his briefcase, and salutes GRAMMA and GRACIE.

GEORGE: We who are about to die salute you!

GRAMMA raises her hand to GEORGE.

We hear the Porsche start up and screech away.

GRAMMA and GRACIE exchange a look. They smile at each other (p. 121).

Although Lambert has allocated Susan to represent the traditional virgin role, Susan is not what one would expect the traditional virgin to be. George's idea of a

virgin is one who trembles beneath the sheets, full of naivety and sexual innocence, and perhaps this too is the viewpoint of the audience. Lambert forces the other characters and ultimately the audience to re-evaluate their pre-conceptions or stereotypes of female roles. Conceivably, Lambert is challenging women to create their own roles in life as opposed to trying to live up to a cultural standard that has been created for them by males or male dominated institutions, and perhaps women can achieve their desired roles without intimate involvement with men. However, they can utilize men as objects to achieve their goal. For example, one would also expect Gracie to be jealous about Susan becoming George's mistress or incensed at George for blatantly taking a mistress in front of her. However, Gracie has gained what she wants, not so much to be George's new wife as to be a mother. Thus Gracie represents Lambert's interpretation of the dilemma women face. How do they achieve their wants and desires against the dominant traditions of a male dominated society?

Susan also conforms to Lambert's thesis that she is writing about women who are struggling with their roles, their sexuality and the limitations that they present. Susan finds herself in the role of virgin, a role that does not traditionally conform to her present behaviour. This is where Susan finds herself struggling. Because of her overt sexuality, people assume she can not occupy the virgin role. However, how can she be sexually liberated and at the same time remain in the role of virgin in a sexually restrained society?

Susan can also be considered to be a static. As does Bunny, Susan's character remains constant throughout the text. Susan states that she knew she would be

George's saviour when she went to his lecture, an event that happened before the time frame of the play, and she never becomes any more self aware than she might have already been at the beginning of the play. Susan also has an inflexible way of responding to situations and characters that present themselves in the play. She is not the comic character that Bunny is because her set of idiosyncracies are not inherently funny, but rather more subtle.

2.23 Gracie

> In a way, the same stern view that feminists flaunt in issuing edicts on what constitutes correct feminist behavior is also the same kind of thinking that goes into anorexia. Or having to be the perfect mother.[45]
>
> - Naomi Wolf

As cited above, Gracie, who is the first female character the audiences sees struggling with her present role, no longer wants to be George's mistress. Her biological clock is ticking very loud. Gracie is starting to feel old and "withered" (p.23) and no longer wants to "lie to her lining (endometrial)" (p.18) by ingesting the pill. She is starting to feel sorry for the little egg that is "kicked down the chute" (p.19) as a result of not being fertilized. This explains her first line in the play when she says, "I dreamt I gave birth...to a duck" (p.7). Gracie is definitely feeling maternal. Despite having her own apartment, several University degrees, and a successful law career, she still feels incomplete. She does not feel like a "real woman" (p.19); a real

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[45] Darling 185.

woman being one that has given birth. Every Tuesday and Thursday night for the past couple of years, she has tried to play the part of George's mistress but every attempt to be the seductive, sexy mistress that appears on the television set has failed. On this particular Tuesday night she decides to surprise George with a vibrator she purchased in order to help revitalize their sex life, a suggestion from a Cosmopolitan magazine she had researched. Gracie however thinks the vibrator is used on the feet; she is definitely not prepared for the role of a mistress. Taking her cue from the television commercial, which George is engrossed in, she advances towards George with vibrator in hand, the stage directions indicate that she speaks in a "*mock seductive (voice), like Catherine Deneuve on TV*" (p.14).

> GRACIE: You don't have to tell me, I know what you want (p.14).

The truth is that Gracie does not know what George wants. As the traditional mistress, Gracie is failing. She is in the wrong role. Gracie, however, wants to know what it would be like to be a wife or mother and gets the chance to try on these roles when she and George engage in their customary role-playing game. It is during these role-playing games that we learn how Gracie differentiates and understands the roles of mistress, wife and mother. For example, when George asks her what has happened recently to make her dream of ducks and buy a vibrator, Gracie responds that she is acting in such a manner as a result of mundane household, wifely and motherly, accidents that have occurred; the "garborator exploded"(p.15) or the "baby flushed itself down the toilet"(p.15) or the "meat prices went up at Safeway"(p.15). The stage directions indicate that Gracie says this "*with an air of wifely martyrdom; she is now*

playing her version of BRENDA, or what she secretly, hopefully, enviously, contemptuously, imagines BRENDA to be" (p.15). Gracie continues to play the 'wife' (BRENDA) and reports that she saw Gracie at Safeway, looking old and aged. Gracie says she looks this way "because she won't complete herself as a woman"(p.19). This section is important because it shows that Gracie is looking at herself through the eyes of another woman. This is how Gracie perceives herself. Gracie is tired of trying to re-vitalize the relationship. Lambert indicates in the stage directions that Gracie speaks "*in a mock-wife voice, but unable to prevent the seriousness from showing*" (p.22), Gracie tells George, as the 'wife', "I have tried to be a good wife to you, George Partington. God knows, I have tried....It hasn't been easy...There was that time I came home from having what'sitsname, did you give one thought to my episiotomy...Like peeing through barbed wire...And this is the thanks I get"(p.22). The irony is that unknown to Gracie, Brenda will soon tell George the same thing. However, Gracie does not want to give up the game. She wonders how George will respond to Brenda when Brenda asks about the affair. As the 'wife', and while mimicking Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter,* Gracie asks George, "You're not having an affair with her (Gracie), are you?...Our Gracie? I mean she (Gracie) is definitely over the hill, over the hump. What has she (Gracie) got that I haven't ?"(p.22). In a stage direction Lambert states that "*He (George) is willing to play this old game, but she (Gracie) is a bit too intense and, as she well knows, the ground rules are explicit. He will never discuss BRENDA with her*"(p.24). She needs to know why George wants her to be his mistress and Gracie asks this in the safety of the role of the wife in a game. For if she asked

George as herself it would mean that he would leave her completely. She knows that he will not talk about Brenda to her, and that George might leave her if she were to be straightforward with him, meaning her ready made family would be gone too. It is not George whom Gracie wants but what George can provide for her, that is to say, the role of wife and mother. Without George, Gracie can have neither, at least not immediately. Gracie has limited (biological) time left to be a mother and to hunt for another man that fits George's domestic situation would be nearly impossible for Gracie. So she puts up with his aggravating ways because it allows her in some way to play the wife and mother. Gracie also needs to know what George's plans are, in terms of Gracie's role in his life, once he has broken the news of their affair to Brenda. So Gracie continues the 'game' to make sure George's future includes her as his wife and mother of his children because, as Bunny so poignantly puts it, "what's the point...if I'm not progressing" (p. 93).

GRACIE: I suppose you think you can go and live off Gracie. I suppose you think Gracie'll be happy to support a man, ninety percent of whose salary goes to child support.

GEORGE: Gracie'll be delighted. Gracie is an ideal mistress. Gracie makes near as much as me.

GRACIE: I see. You don't support your mistress then. I always thought mistresses were kept in sinful luxury (p.30).

Gracie wants to understand why George wants her to be his mistress because she certainly does not seem to fit the stereotypical mistress role. She is not one of

those mistresses that are "kept in sinful luxury" nor is she the young and beautiful woman in the television commercials. The way in which George describes Gracie's personal qualities seems to fit more closely to the traditional role of a wife, not a mistress.

GEORGE: What I like about Gracie, she is a very moral lady...When I choose Gracie for a mistress, I chose a reasonable woman, a sensible woman, a woman who would never make a fuss or a scene. I am not a twentieth century man, I am an eighteenth century man..

GRACIE: I see. You chose Gracie...(because) she would: (a) never make a fuss, (b) never make a scene, (c) never make... wait... ultimatums.

GEORGE: Exactly.

GRACIE: Never say, "It's her or me." Never be difficult... Never talk of love...

GEORGE: Being a lady of high principles, naturally not.

GRACIE: "Love" being a term used only by immoral ladies...and wives (p.31).

There is a definite incongruity between what Gracie sees as a mistress role and what George sees. There are different types of mistresses - it is the man's expectation of the mistress role that determines its definition and not the individual woman's personality.

Finally, being sick of this game and very angry at George's responses, Gracie tells George that "you are going to have to make a choice. I can't go on like this"

(p.36). This time she is not 'playing' around. She means it for real. What is interesting is that the choice is not her's but George's! George leaves her apartment without giving her the answer she wants. She leaves her future in George's hands at least until the next morning, when she meets Brenda for the first time. The audience will not see Gracie again until near the end of Act Two, the final Act. Gracie is merely referred to in Act One, Scene Two when George telephones her and tells her to come over to meet Brenda. A further exploration of Gracie's character also occurs in the section, 2.25 Brenda, because Gracie's character is an integral part of Brenda's character development.

2.24 Gramma

> Off target speech stems from an age-related loss of the ability to inhibit stray thoughts from entering conversations, perhaps due to the declining function of the brain's frontal lobe....It permits more information to get into working memory, from the outside world and from your own knowledge. You can't prevent stuff coming into working memory, and once it's there, you can't dump it, or not as efficiently as younger people.[46]

Before there was the popular Aaron Spelling T.V show The Golden Girls, whose characters were hip, intelligent, sexually alive seniors, and after Edward Albee's characters in The American Dream, there was Betty Lambert's Gramma. Lambert describes Gramma, who is Brenda's mother, as an attractive woman in her fifties who

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[46] Judy Foreman, "Researchers Probe the 'Ramblings' of Old Age" Edmonton Journal 17 November 1993: C11.

dresses in fashionable but casual clothes, but no Fortrel. She even has a rocking chair on the porch. Gramma displays casualness and calmness in her attitude about everything that goes on around her. She is not a prude. The first time the audience is introduced to Gramma is in the beginning of Scene Two when George arrives home to find a naked woman (Susan) covered with whipping cream. "*Gramma sits motionless in her rocker on the patio, looking through the open french doors at the scene in the living room*" (p.38). She is quite intrigued by the happenings of Brenda's "Tactile Discovery" group. Gramma has evidently been watching the proceedings over a period of weeks because she can see some kind of progression in the group. Gramma says, "They've come quite a ways from last month" (p.39). She is the one who informs George who everybody is and what Tactile Discovery is all about. Gramma is the elder objective commentator. She even gives George a sampling of the exercise.

GEORGE: ...It's Reclamation of the Elbows Night tonight is it?

GRAMMA: (*watching*) Elbows. Knees. Toes. The inside of the fingers.

GEORGE: What?

GRAMMA: The inside of the fingers. Here.

She lifts his hand and, like SUSAN, rubs her finger along the inside of his fourth finger. After a moment, he pulls his hand away and rubs it vigorously.

GRAMMA: See?

She laughs. Her laugh is rather like that of SUSAN.

GEORGE: Margaret, you are a very wicked old lady.

GRAMMA: Oh yes (p.43).

This passage shows us that Gramma still considers herself to be a sensual being and furthermore wants to explore this side of herself. Gramma seems to know and understand more about this exercise than the participants do. Why doesn't Gramma participate in these exercises if she is so interested in them? Neither Gramma nor the other characters say why she hasn't been invited to participate. However, since Lambert is trying to write plays about women struggling with their role, their sexuality and the limitations of these roles, Gramma fits perfectly into this examination. Gramma is struggling with her role as a senior citizen in a society which compartmentalizes certain populations according to stereotypes. Stereotypically, seniors are considered to be asexual and Gramma has realized that this is a limitation of her role. By introducing a character such as Gramma, Lambert examines what it would be like for a physically and mentally active and alert older, mature woman to be labelled as being too old, too senile, and too undesirable to participate in these kinds of activities. Gramma is only in her fifties, which is young by today's standards. The other female characters treat her as if she's far older and in a patronizing and de-valuing manner. For example, Gramma's wit is very dry and when Bunny explains to George that Tai Chi is the Chinese martial art of meditative aggression, Gramma responds with:

GRAMMA: (*coming in from the patio*). Or how to kill with elegance.

BUNNY: Oh, Mrs. Provkov. You're so funny. Isn't she a funny lady George?

She crosses to GRAMMA and boisterously touches her on the shoulder.

Oh I just hope...

She raises her voice as if she was speaking to a deaf person.

...I'm as wonderful as you are when I'm your age, Mrs.Provkov. I just think you're wonderful. Isn't she wonderful George?

GEORGE: *with a look at GRAMMA*. Wonderful.

GRAMMA: Wonderful (p.49).

Only George speaks to Gramma in a mature, adult manner, respecting her for the funny and interesting person that she is; an equal in all respects. George calls her by her first name, Margaret, while the other female characters (Bunny and Brenda) either call her Gramma or Mrs. Provkov. Both these latter roles (Mrs. and Gramma), as the other female roles in this play, are defined by their relationship to someone else, most often men. Possibly George responds in this way because Gramma is a mother figure to him albeit, not his own, or perhaps he feels a kinship towards her as a fellow educator; they both teach history lessons. Even her daughter, Brenda, treats Gramma as if she were a child or a senile dependant. For example, Brenda tells her mother that it's time for her "beddy-bye" (p.56), and when Gramma goes off into her long winded stories, the stage directions indicate that Brenda "*looks heavenward to ask for patience*"(p.55).

Brenda views Gramma's speeches as the gibberish of an old woman and

ignores Gramma when she speaks in her 'riddles'. Gramma's function is similar to that of a chorus in a Greek play. Oscar Brockett, in his text The History of the Theatre Sixth Edition, describes the six functions of a Greek chorus. First, it is a character in the play; it gives advice, expresses opinions, asks questions and sometimes takes an active part in the action.[47] Although Gramma does not express opinions or ask questions about the action or the other characters, she provides facts about situations; she is an observer of the action more than a participator in it. Second, it often establishes the ethical or social framework of the events and sets up a standard against which the action may be judged.[48] Gramma is the first character that George meets when he returns home from Gracie's apartment. Gramma provides George, and hence the audience, with a background of the events that are happening, an introduction to the other characters on the stage, and establishes the comical nature of the play. For example:

GEORGE: What the hell is that supposed to be?

GRAMMA: It's called Tactile Discovery.

GEORGE: Oh yes. Tactile Discovery. Did Brenda make that up all by herself.

GRAMMA: No, it was in a book....

GEORGE: Where does she *get* all of these people?

GRAMMA: *knowing perfectly well what "people" GEORGE means* Well, you know Francis

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[47] Oscar Brockett, The History of the Theatre Sixth Edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991): 26.

[48] Brockett 26.

Dimwoodie, George. He's your stockbroker.

GEORGE: I don't mean Francis Dimwoodie. If Brenda raised his consciousness two inches, he'd have to cut it off.

GRAMMA: Well, you know Ms. Flyntton. From down the street...(p.40).

Third, the chorus frequently serves as an ideal spectator, reacts to the events and characters as the dramatist might hope the audience would.[49] Gramma reacts to the majority of the action and the characters in a sarcastic manner. Lambert put the conventions of a 1970's society on a pedestal to be laughed at by everyone.[50] Gramma provides this opportunity of laughter, through her use of sarcasm. For example:

GRAMMA: ....Brenda couldn't quite bring herself to ask Francis (to smear himself with whipping cream). I think he wears garters. And then Nelson went into a lotus position and concentrated on his manta ray.

GEORGE: I believe that's his mantra.

GRAMMA: Oh? I like my idea better...(p.42).

Fourth, the chorus helps to set the overall mood of the play and of individual scenes and to heighten dramatic effect.[51] As shown in the above quotations, Gramma sets the dominant mood for the play and also sets the mood before Brenda and George's fight scene by speaking directly to the audience, in a soliloquy manner, and by opening Act

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[49] Brockett 26.

[50] "Sqrieux-de-Dieu" Encore (Spring 1986): 5.

[51] Brockett 26.

Two with a hymn, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*. She again speaks directly to the audience as if to set up the next scene for them. Gramma's speeches will be dealt with later in this section. Fifthly, the chorus adds movement, spectacle, song, dance, and thus contributes much to theatrical effectiveness.[52] Gramma is associated with the music in this play. Nelson, the free-spirited hippie character, plays the flute and is linked to Gramma by this instrument. For example, the stage direction indicates that, "*He (Nelson) puts his cape on the left sofa and gives his flute to Gramma...He shrugs, picks up his cape and takes the flute from GRAMMA. GRAMMA smiles at him. He smiles at her and begins to play "Ode to Joy" on his flute...*(p.58). Before Gramma's second big speech, the stage directions indicate that she is, "*listening to the flute until it dies*" (p.59). And at the very end of the play, when Gramma says her last lines, the stage directions indicate that, "*The music comes up. It is "Ode of Joy*"(p.122). Gramma also sings just before her final speech which opens Act Two. Whether this heightens the dramatic effect largely or adds to the theatrical effectiveness depends on the abilities of the actor playing the role of Gramma. Sixth, the chorus serves an important rhythmical function, creating pauses or retardations during which the audience may reflect upon what has happened and what is to come.[53] This is exactly what happens as a direct result of Gramma's speeches.

Gramma narrates a series of three stories, and indeed this is Gramma's main purpose in this play. Gramma's first speech occurs in Act One, Scene Two while

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[52] Brockett 26.

[53] Brockett 26.

Brenda is preparing for George's S &M surprise. Although Gramma's speaks directly to Brenda in this first speech, Brenda does not pay any attention to her mother's 'ramblings'. This first speech is not meant to be a directed to the audience, it is truly meant for Brenda to hear, and although Brenda leaves the room on several occasions during the speech, this speech is meant to be directed at Brenda. This is an important distinction because it illustrates that Brenda neither listens to or heeds the advice of her mother, nor understands the metaphors in this speech. Undaunted by Brenda's lack of attention, Gramma proceeds in the telling of her story. Gramma stares at the "*smeared and bleared*" (p.55) wooden chest that Susan was lying on. This reminds her of a story: The other day she went to the meat market and noticed that the all the meat had gone black and shrivelled in its package. "...That's the way it goes. In the end. To the best of us" (p.56), Gramma says, "so it doesn't do to feel smug. Black and withered and shrivelled in the grave" (p.56). The new girl working at the market was quite taken aback. "That's what we'll all be like in the grave...Well, Girlie, your meat's gone black....That's what we'll all be like. In the grave. She said she was going to get cremated" (p.56), Gramma concludes. The story is not about Gramma hassling some poor girl over rotting meat in the butcher shop. Gramma knows that senior citizens are stereotyped as hasslers of store clerks and uses this as a decoy for an important message. The moral, so to speak, of Gramma's story is that things aren't always what they appear to be on the surface. It's about being masked. It is not until you take off the mask or cellophane and paper tray, that you find what is underneath the surface. And what you find underneath might not be pleasant. What you might find could be

too hard to look at, rotting or dying. If you mask what you naturally are, the masking becomes only a surface cure for unhappiness, and as a result your insides or 'underneaths' will gradually rot. You are living a slow death. Everybody dies and that is the time to be black, withered and shrivelled not when you are still living. It is a warning to the young and older alike, to Brenda and to the audience. Gramma's speech is similar to a prelude in the same sort of way a Chorus starts a Greek play and warns the audience before the action starts and how the Fool warns King Lear of his own actions. Gramma speech foreshadows Brenda's explanation of why she is fulfilling her role as wife to George and the sudden realization that she can be much happier if she changes her role at the end of the play. Lambert returns to this theme of discovering unexpected grotesqueness lurking underneath surfaces, and the need to closely examine what is underneath surfaces in her next play, Jennie's Story and more profoundly in her final play, Under The Skin.

Gramma's second story also occurs in Act One Scene Two, shortly after her first speech. Brenda has completed setting up the trapeze, chains, ankle cuffs etc. for the night's activities. Both Nelson and Brenda leave the room which allows Gramma to speak directly to the audience for her second speech. Gramma's story is in two parts but they are confusing as if told by someone suffering from Alzeheimer's. The first element of Gramma's story is about roles that she found herself in when she was younger and the expectations and limitations of these roles. She had come from "the Old Country and married this farmer near Estevan, Saskatchewan. And I was as green as grass. I was having Brenda before I could turn around. But this farmer's wife down

the road took me aside and taught me how to make jam...Instead of babies..."(p.59). Gramma has been the virgin ('as green as grass'), the wife, and the mother, and all before she knew what was happening to her. What was left for her to do in Estevan Saskatchewan as a woman but learn how to make jam? That was the natural progression of womanhood in this small town. However, making jam prevented pregnancies in a strange way. One needed "mason jars, rubber rings and the berries, of course. And a lot of parawax"(p.56). In those days there was not such a thing as the birth control pill to prevent pregnancies. Gramma suggests that the woman secretly used parawax as a contraceptive device. Gramma also tells of an "utterly shameless [woman], a widow, [who] used to go in and stock up on parawax and she never preserved one single berry. I had tons of jam in my pantry..."(p.56). These fruits are not of the womb. It suggests that this other woman stocked up on parawax so that other women could not use it as birth control or that she used parawax all the time. The second element of the story concerns Brenda and Gramma's husband (Brenda's father) and suggests that they are similar in their personalities. Gramma tells that when Brenda was younger she found the pill to be "too cold blooded, not romantic enough"(p.56) and that the thought of using parawax was totally disgusting. "Brenda likes things natural....Natural and a bit dangerous. 'Course, since she went on the pill...Well she had to...She's had to use her imagination. It keeps her interested. Her father was inclined that way. He was a fine big man. Not a decent man. But a fine big man. She gets her imagination from him. *She laughs*" (p.56). Gramma hints to the audience that she has participated in some imaginative sexual practices when she was

younger and sets aside the beliefs that imaginative sexual practices did not occur before the 1970's. Gramma confirms that this is what she means when she picks up Brenda's whip and says:

Gramma: Your father had one of those.

Brenda: Daddy didn't even have a horse.

Gramma: (*turning on the way down the hall*) I know.

She laughs and exits (p.60).

Gramma reveals through this second speech that she knows Brenda better than Brenda knows herself. Gramma can see Brenda struggling with her role and her sexuality and the limitations of Brenda's role before Brenda can because she has been in Brenda's position. In her speech she hints that Brenda liked sex "natural" (p.59), without the pill and a "bit dangerous" (p.59). Gramma warns Brenda about mixing sentimentality and sex. Traditionally, women were solely responsible for birth control. Birth Control was the consequence of wanting to be sexual but not wanting to become pregnant and therefore placed limitations on women who wanted to be sexual because of the non spontaneous, unnaturalness of taking the birth control pill. Although taking the 'pill' is not as intrusive as the condom might be, perhaps taking the pill everyday and leaving the package at your bedside would deprive sex of spontaneity. In her second speech, Gramma comments, "Well, Brenda, you see where romance gets you. Babies popping out like peas in a pod" (p.59). Brenda obviously did not heed her mother's warning because, as the audience finds out shortly after this speech, romance got her pregnant; forcing her to marry George. Gramma seems to be suggesting that

because Brenda insisted on the romanticization of sex and her role, that she inevitably created her own limitations on both. Perhaps in this instance, Gramma also talks to the audience about the limitations that they may be putting on their own lives. A very important dynamic of the play is the relationship between Gramma and the audience and Lambert will continue to use this convention for Gramma's next speech. Lambert cleverly ingratiates Gramma with the audience by creating a funny, witty, comical character who is easily likeable, and utilizes the traditional wisdom of learning from elders.

Gramma's third and most important speech opens Act Two. It is the next morning; the morning after the supposed romp between George and Brenda. Gramma enters singing, "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures bright and small, all things wise and wonderful..."(p.83). She has decided to become the reincarnation of the Great Earth Mother "because I was getting sick and tired of Brenda always telling me I had an identity crisis"(p.83). In this speech she goes back to the idea that eventually we all grow old, like the rotting meat in the grave, in Gramma's first speech. "When a person gets old, you say, "This can't be happening"(p.83). Gramma reveals that because she was getting older, like Brenda, she tried to revitalize her marriage, although using slightly different approaches than Brenda; different generations have different things at their disposal. "Oh, I've tried everything I could think of. Pink crepe paper around the lamp in the bedroom. Lard on the skin. Rejuvenation pills from the Watkin's man... But nothing seemed to work" (p.84). One morning Gramma relates that she woke up to a false spring-like day, complete with a

warm chinook and with crocuses popping up out of the snow. "Fooled again" (p.84), Gramma says with dismay. Again, the idea of how deceptive appearances can be or how expectations of something glorious are really a let down. Her husband was trying to rise from his sleep and was finding it difficult because of his old age. Here was this fine big man dealing with an old body that was keeping him from doing what he used to be able to do. After witnessing this, Gramma decided her next step. She was going to kill her husband by putting Paris Green in his favourite Saskatoon berry jam. "Well he was surprised. But, just before the end, he saw my logic" (p.85). Better to be dead than live a deadly life. She was to die along side him, but she waited, being the good wife that she was, " 'til he needed for nothing" (p.85). She took one last look around and then came to the sudden realization that she hated Saskatoon berry jam. She made it and ate it because it was her husband's favourite. "I've always hated it. Hated puttin' it up, hated pickin' them, hated the whole thing" (p.85). Gramma pulled out the blueberry jam that Brenda had sent her and had that instead. At last, she can eat what she likes. Gramma came to the realization that she was living her husband's life and not her own. Now was her chance to live her life as she pleased, without having to live up to any expectations of a role, free of limitations.

At the end of the play when Brenda decides to leave her house, her husband, her children, and her mother, in order to pursue her own happiness, the last thing she says to her mother is:

Brenda: Oh mother, I know you're never going to understand...

Gramma: Just go Brenda...Maybe it's better than

Paris Green (p.119).

Gramma understands, having come to the same crossroads in her own life, and hence so does the audience because of Gramma's involvement with them, more than Brenda thinks. Paris Green, a divorce, a switching of roles: they all accomplish the same thing. One kind of life ends and another begins. Not a life necessarily better, just different.

Gramma has the honour of closing the play in the same manner as a Chorus in a Greek play. After every female has switched their role Gramma looks out into the audience and concludes, "Now isn't that a sight ? Puts me in mind of the Watkin's' man" (p.122).

Gramma understands all female roles, having performed in all of them at one point of her life. She sees the limiting aspects of every female role, and now at the end of her life, sees the wasted effort by women to confine themselves to the limitations of each role.

2.25 Brenda

> Is it possible to have a feminism that is joyous, relentless, outrageous, libidinally charged?[54]
>
> -Avital Ronell

Although Brenda does not appear until Act Two, the audience first learns about Brenda in Act One, Scene One, when Gracie pretends to be her in a role playing game with George. One of the rules that the audience learns from this role playing game is that George will never discuss Brenda with Gracie. The 'Brenda' that the audience sees in Act One, Scene One is Gracie's interpretation of what Brenda would be like. However, the interesting component of Gracie's interpretation of Brenda is that it is an idealization and romanticised view of what a mother and wife role should be, not a dramatization of the 'real' Brenda. However, at this point of the play the audience and Gracie do not know that Brenda is not at all the typical mother and housewife. When the audience finally meets Brenda in Act Two their expectations are turned upside down. Brenda is the true heroine of this play, for it is her journey that the audience follows throughout the course of the play.

The stage directions indicate that Brenda is first seen, "*wearing a loose caftan, hair pinned back*" (p.45). Her living room is smeared with ketchup and whipping cream and filled with her 'students'. She tries to clean up before her husband George gets home, so that he will not be upset by these activities. She is too late. The atmosphere is one of constant movement; Brenda is rushing everybody out of her

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[54] Juno and Vale 129.

living room. For example, she says to Bunny, "Well, time's getting on. I do have other responsibilities" (p.47), and to Francis, she says, "Come on, Francis, I've got coffee and Danish in the kitchen" (p.48). She wants everyone out of her house so that she can prepare her surprise for George. Bunny constantly sings praises of Brenda's group work and the audience does see Brenda working as a therapist of some kind when Francis says:

FRANCIS: ...Actually if I say what I *feel*..."

BRENDA nods in encouragement.

I feel...hungry... (p.48).

One gets the sense that this would have been a long night for Brenda, and that her array of students are more bizarre than any exercise they participate in. Brenda seems to tolerate her students, except for Susan who she seems to battle with. For example,

BRENDA: I'm sorry, George. We had such trouble starting tonight.

She looks at SUSAN.

For some reason (p.45).

When Brenda suggests to Susan that she take a shower to remove the whipping cream, Susan virtually ignores Brenda, preferring to speak to George. Finally when Susan does decide to take a shower Brenda comments, "I don't think she is going to work out somehow" (p.48). The source of this conflict between Brenda and Susan are a result of Brenda's own insecurities about herself. The whole purpose of an exercise like 'Tactile Discovery' is to find out about one's own limitations or one's self. Susan does not have sexual limitations. Brenda does and this is the source of conflict between them.

Perhaps Brenda is jealous of Susan's lack of inhibitions.

At first glance Brenda seems very assured of herself. One would expect that someone, like Brenda, who is instructing a class on how to rid oneself of inhibitions, would themselves be uninhibited. However this is not the case. Again Lambert shows us a woman who is striving to fit an inappropriate role. For example, when Nelson walks into the living room to discover the array of sex toys complete with a trapeze that Brenda is setting up, the stage directions indicate that Brenda is "*slightly embarrassed*" (p.57) and "*laughs awkwardly*" (p.57). Why should Brenda react in this manner. After all, she teaches students these maneuvers? Brenda obviously does not practice what she preaches or has very compartmentalized views of herself and her role and her reaction shows a woman who is very unsure of herself in terms of her present sexuality and role. She is a very poor role model for her students. However, Brenda tries to defend her actions to Nelson.

> BRENDA: ...the trouble with most people today is that they've forgotten how to have fun...most people today have just given up on life....You're never too old for life Nelson. Everyone is so repressed...They repress all their natural sensuality. And then they just start to die. Now tonight, you see, that wasn't supposed to be erotic in the usual sense. No. What I was trying for was to become aware of all those...unexpected... unconsidered...unthinkable..." (p.57).

This is exactly what Gramma was trying to impart in her story about the meat market. This is the first time that the audience sees Brenda struggling with her role and sexuality. Up to this point Brenda seems somewhat competent in her ability to teach

self-help classes and gives the impression of being open minded, and relaxed with her sexuality and role. However, although she has finished giving a complete explanation of why she's doing this exercise to Nelson, she has not convinced herself that this is an appropriate activity for someone her age and actually asks Nelson, a younger man, for reassurance!

> *[BRENDA] laughs a nervous, conciliatory laugh as she waves the screwdriver at him.*
>
> BRENDA: I suppose you (Nelson) think I'm too old for...
>
> *She realizes what she's waving and puts the screwdriver behind her back.*
>
> ...this.
>
> NELSON: No, no. You're really very young.
>
> BRENDA: Oh, go on (p.58).

Brenda also depends on outside forces to define or determine her role for her, not trusting her own instincts about how to be sexual. For example, she uses *Cosmopolitan* magazine as a resource guide to stimulating her marriage and *The Joy of Sex* to review for erogenous zones. The effort that Brenda puts into this evening and her final appearance is hilarious and Brenda provides one of the play's funnier moments described in the following stage direction:

> *BRENDA now launches into her plan. She takes out the high leather boots, puts them on, catching her leg in the zipper once, a bit painfully. She lights some incense and turns on the stereo, which is in the buffet. Witch-like music comes on. She looks around the room, then shakes*

out her hair. She takes off her caftan. She is wearing an S&M leather outfit. She does a few seductive steps to the music and poses...
BRENDA now has to hurry. She has forgotten one thing, the civet oil. She takes it out of a bag and checks the book, "The Joy of Sex", for erogenous zones. She is rather startled at some of the indicated erogenous zones but, with a shrug, applies the oil anyway. There is a quick ordering of bags, etc., a last look around and then calls...

George, you can come out now. But don't look. Promise.

She races out to the kitchen...Brenda comes back with a tray of martinis in a jug, iced glasses, olives in a little dish and toothpicks. She sets it down on the wooden chest near him.

She pours him a drink, wafts it under his nose, then takes one hand from his eye and puts a drink in it. She also has a Vitamin E bottle. She shakes out a pill and pops it in his mouth....She pours herself a drink and sips it She looks at him with consideration and goes and turns off the stereo. She picks up the whip and oils it from a plastic bottle of Vaseline Intensive Care from one of the bags. She raises the whip and cracks it. She holds the pose.

He jumps, then looks and stares at her (p.61).

Although George insists that he appreciates all the trouble Brenda has gone through to create this evening, he is not interested in her sexual advances. Similarly he rebuffed Gracie when she tried to make sexual advances towards him. Brenda and Gracie both try to give something to George that he does not want.

BRENDA: Sometimes I think, I really think, that all you want, really want, is a typical West Van wife to sit and watch TV with you all night (p.63).

Of course, this is exactly what George wants. However, these women who are associated with George try to give him something else.

These above stage directions provide the audience with insight into Brenda's character and the other characters provide the audience more insight by what they say about her. However, it is perhaps George who provides the most accurate description of Brenda and it is not until Brenda forces George to be truthful about their relationship that we get a closer look at Brenda.

> GEORGE: I'm a simple man really. I like cornflakes in the morning and you give me oysters...Your trouble, Brenda is...you take an obsessively romantic view of the natural man...I do rather resent your inability to partake of a civilized conversation without continually larding it with the psychological bargain basement jargon of a generation at least ten years removed from your own (p.65).

Although George apologizes for possibly hurting Brenda's feelings, she does not give up on her attempt to be rational in her desire to "introduce an element of surprise into (her) marriage" (p.65) and encourages George to "...let it all hang out" (p.67). However, when George does not cooperate, Brenda responds with anger and frustrated, "Oooohs!" (p.68) several times. The series of stage directions during this scene indicates that Brenda is starting to become impatient and somewhat violent in her pursuit. For example,

> *She takes the key with which she has locked the ankle cuff and throws it at him...* (p.65).
>
> *BRENDA does not enjoy this and makes a disparaging*

sound at the mention of his mother... (p.66).

She gets up and moves clankingly across the floor (p.66).

She screams and lunges at him, but comes abruptly at the end of her chain (p.68).

She kicks at the chain (p.68).

She kicks at the chain like a child (p.68).

She leaps at him to the full extent of her chain...(p.70).

It is here that George introduces their wedding night high jinxes as indicated in the "Story" part of the chapter. Brenda laughs along until George says that he was not "yet uncowed" (p.75), by all that went wrong on his wedding night. "It took my bride to cow me..." (p.75). The stage direction indicate that Brenda "*stops laughing*" (p.75). This is the decisive point in the script where the character of Brenda changes. Before the wedding night story, Brenda said:

BRENDA: All my life I've believed that everyone was a mysterious deep well. A deep mysterious bottomless well. It's tragic really. I took your measure by my own height (p.68).

Up until this point, Brenda has encouraged her students and George to become more aware of themselves and to express their feelings. However, Brenda has not done this for herself. After the wedding night story, Brenda has gained some insight into her relationship with George and herself. She is starting to look beneath the surface.

BRENDA: ...If you want to know the truth George, you've always made me sick...Oh you're a good man, oh yes, everyone's always

> telling me what a good man you are, but do you have any idea how boring a good man can be?. God, how I've longed for a bastard. Do you have the least inkling of how difficult it's been, to keep my sexual interest for you alive all these years?... Everyone thinks I'm so lucky. It drives me mad!... (p.76).

Brenda has given up on the idea of re-vitalizing George and when George tells her that he has a mistress, Brenda scoffs at him.

> BRENDA: George, if that was only true, I'd give thanks to God on my bended knees (p.77).

When George actually telephones Gracie, at Brenda's request, and tells her that he has told Brenda and to come over immediately, the audience sees how Brenda views the mistress role. The stage directions indicate that Brenda talks, "*pretending to be the fake mistress*" (p.79). Brenda says things like:

> BRENDA: "Oh, you haven't. Oh George, how absolutely sickening! Oh!" (p.79).

and

> BRENDA: "Oh George, it's all too thrilling for words" (p.80).

finally,

> BRENDA: " Oh you're so masterful, George" (p.80).

Brenda's interpretation of a mistress role exemplifies a mistress who is simple minded, anxious, bubbly, displaying a dumb blonde mentality. Perhaps Brenda is reflecting the traditional image of a mistress.

When Brenda meets Gracie for the first time at the end of Act Two, she can't

believe Gracie is the mistress. Even Brenda can see that Gracie does not fit the traditional role of the mistress. Brenda gasps, "But, you're just a (ordinary, middle-aged woman)...you're not (a mistress)...you are (Gracie)?" (p.102). Brenda's own stereotypes of the role of a mistress are explored.

The inappropriateness of Brenda's role as a mother becomes more evident when she discusses her children with Gracie. Although Brenda will later admit she is not a good mother, Brenda tries to create the image that she is, for Gracie's sake, although not convincingly. Brenda says that she would like to buy her tea from Murchie's, instead of the tea that comes with china ducks (again the duck symbol) and alligators, however she can't because, "I have to think of the children" (p.106). This is the first hint that Brenda feels trapped by her role. She is not saying that she buys this certain tea for her children because they particularly like these trinkets, but rather, she can't get what she wants because she has to think of her children. Brenda can't believe how pushy Gracie is being about a divorce. Gracie has thought of every detail and is forcing Brenda to comply to a set of rules. Brenda is not really mad about Gracie suggesting that she divorce George, but more upset that she does not have a say or choice in the proceedings and that no one has bothered to ask her want she wants. She no longer wants to play the role of the wife and mother. She sees this as her chance to be who she wants to be without any constraints of any role.

BRENDA: I don't want George. You take him...You want a child? I've got lots. You have them.

GRACIE: I'm afraid my apartment is hardly big enough for all your children.

BRENDA: Then take the house! I've always hated this house. You take it! You look after it. Big rotten filthy barn of a house! You think I care a damn about this fucking house? Take it. It's yours!...And take George. He is so boring. You don't know. He is so boring and he make these awful jokes all the time. And he talks and talks and talks, until you give in, just to make him stop. And he never listens, and he mocks me. Oh, you don't know how I've tried. He bought me a dishwasher and he thought I should be satisfied. My life. My life. Dirty diapers! Swishing them in the toilet. Babies sicking up on me. I've vacuumed my way eight times around the world! And bag lunches. I was never really a mother. I hate it. I hate being a mother. You really want to be a mother?

GRACIE: Yes. Yes I do. I see these babies? Out in front of Safeway's? And I feel like...just releasing the safety brake and...on the buggy. I feel just like...I mean, their mothers can't really care or they wouldn't leave them out there all al...

She stops, embarrassed at herself.

BRENDA: Maybe you're one of those natural mothers. I'm not. I am not a mother. I always hated being a mother. I only liked getting pregnant. Hunh. I'm not a mother and...I'm not wife. Oh my God.

GRACIE: I never wanted to be a mother. And I certainly never wanted to be a wife. I used to sneer at women like you.

BRENDA: I used to sneer at women like you.

GRACIE: Feel sorry for you.

BRENDA: Yes. Scared of you.

GRACIE: Yes.

BRENDA: Yes (p.110).

Brenda has a sudden revelation and decides that she no longer wants to play the role of mother and wife. She faces the hard truth, takes a good look at what is beneath the surface of these roles and decides she is not going to lead a impotent, unhappy life. Brenda suggests to Gracie that they switch roles and house keys. "And I could move into your place. I can support myself. I've taken a hundred different courses in God knows what" (p.112). Gracie is somewhat reluctant at first until she sees the possibility for a fulfilling future after all, as she indicates, "It's my life" (p.114). They change roles, and within a few seconds Brenda is out the door ready for her new life while Gracie looks around her new house and starts to pick up the mess.

2.3 Conclusion

Three of the female characters in Sqrieux-de-Dieu have changed places and roles with each other and all are looking forward to a future of hope, possibility and uncertainty. Gracie is now a mother and wife, Susan will possibly become George's mistress, Gramma will stay at George's and Gracie's and possibly get the respect that she deserves, Bunny will have to look for a new 'therapist' and will continue to grow as a human being unless she loses herself in the self help section of her local feminist bookstore, and Brenda is looking towards a life as a woman of the world. George, well, George is George.

The main focus of this play is role exploration by the female characters. Gracie experiments with a variety of roles which present themselves through the television medium in commercials and movies, Bunny explores her role through feminist ideology and her dreams, Susan through her classes, Gramma through others, and Brenda through Pop psychology, *The Joy of Sex*, and *Cosmopolitan* magazine. None applies her own creativity to her exploration of these roles. Possibilities present themselves through external forces only. The only role change at the end of the play that is motivated internally is Brenda's. Hence she is the protagonist or the heroine of the play. It is her journey that we follow. Stephen Godfrey, a critic for the Globe and Mail who reviewed Sqrieux-de-Dieu in 1986 suggested that George was the play's hero. Godfrey noted that,"...hero is, frankly, not the right word for a man who is almost as bland and predictable as he says he is..."[55] That is because he is not the hero. Although the first scene of the play, which occupies a lot of stage time takes place between Gracie and George, this is Brenda's journey. Brenda is the heroine, the one dynamic character that the audience follows, and the one character who changes throughout the course of the play.

Lambert had stated that she was writing about women who were struggling with their role, their sexuality and their limitations. This theme is evident in her first stage play, and in fact the characters support the theme. For example, Bunny, feeling the pressures of the feminist movement, questions and explores her own sexuality and

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[55] Stephen Godfrey, "One Man's Smut is Another Man's Sominex" Globe and Mail 30 April 1983: E13.

her role as a woman in the late 1970's. This is manifested by Bunny divorcing her husband, because someone else said it would be a good thing for her to do, attending Brenda's self-help seminars, and enrolling in women's studies classes. Bunny is looking for an external cure for her feelings of inadequacies. Brenda teaches pseudo-psychology exercises in her living room in the evenings after a long day of dealing with her mother and her children, hoping that this external sense of authority, sexuality and power will bring her the happiness she seeks. Brenda explores her own sexuality through the use of sexual exercises with her students and S&M games with George; however, neither one brings her much satisfaction nor success she seeks. Gracie initiates role playing games with George, trying on different voices, attitudes, and approaches while pretending to be the seductress mistress but she fails to arouse him. She then explores what she thinks is the happiness of being a mother and wife and since she is failing miserably as a mistress. Gracie feels the roles of mother and wife are her destination. Susan no longer wants to be designated in the role as sexually limiting virgin, preferring the excitement of exercising power as a sexual being. She is the only person to fully participate in the 'Tactile Discovery' exercise, appears naked on stage, and explores the full extent the sexual element of her sexuality. However, the other characters either have no interest in Susan or deem her to be too sexual and therefore a problematic person. Finally, Gramma, having been through the ups and downs of all these female roles, struggles with being an older woman and being perceived by the younger generation as senile and sexless.

Lambert has said that she was "taught to distrust any other woman; you could

be her friend up to a point, but if a man got involved in the situation, she would betray you absolutely."[56] The distrust that Lambert talked about and the lack of communication between women which often leads to this distrust is embedded throughout this play, but most particularly in the last scene between Brenda and Gracie. Brenda used to hate women like Gracie who were single, successful, and did not have children. Gracie used to feel sorry for women like Brenda who were burdened with children, married, and tied down. This is the only time Brenda and Gracie talk to each other in the entire play and for the most part, they miscommunicate. They are talking at each other on different wave lengths, misunderstanding each other or not listening to what the other is saying. Their speech resembles two monologues occurring at parallel times. In fact, none of the female characters communicates effectively. For example, Brenda ignores Bunny, patronizes Gramma, loathes Susan, and talks to Gracie at the end of the play because she is forced to. Susan, for her part, does not carry on a meaningful conversation with any of the female characters, but speaks in one or two word sentences for the most part, and prefers to talk to George, usually when no one else is on stage. Bunny patronizes Gramma, is intolerant of Susan, and only speaks with Brenda when she is worried about her progress. Gramma tries to talk to Brenda but her meaningful riddles or stories fall on deaf ears. It is interesting that all of the female characters can effectively communicate with George. Ultimately, all the female characters are striving for his attention. Therefore, when Lambert stated that her plays seem to really be

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[56] Worthington 57.

concerned with women relating to each other[57], she does not necessarily mean this relationship to be a positive one. Perhaps Lambert is trying to explore how women relate to each other in particular circumstances and roles, and how some women struggle because of the lack of understanding, sympathy or empathy from each other. This lack of understanding results in suspicion, envy or sneering and that in turn results in an internal struggle.

Lambert said that if she looked back at her own work she thought she might have been co-opted by the male-dominated literary system or model. That is to say, her female characters were blockers or supporters of some male character's action. This is not the case. The main action of the play is directed by a female character's journey. This does not mean that the outcome of the plot or even the characters have a hard hitting-feminist agenda. At the end of the play, the female characters are given the choice of whether or not to abandon their existing role, which they do except for Bunny and Gramma. The majority of the female characters choose to remain in traditional roles available to women: mother, mistress, wife, virgin, widow. All of these roles exist solely in relationship to males. What is ironic in this play is that the male characters show no interest in the female characters. For example, Nelson's main concern is for the ozone layer, although Susan desperately tries to engage him into sexual exploration, Francis is suggested to be a homosexual, and George is interested only in a civilized conversation and a nice bowl of macaroni and cheese. If a woman can- not give this to George, she is not much use to him. Lambert's female characters

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[57] Worthington 62.

place themselves in roles that are determined largely by a patriarchal society, external influences, and other women. They choose to remain in these roles despite knowing the pitfalls. It is the female characters who maintain the rigorous, unwritten rules associated with each role, not the male characters. So where do these female characters procure role models? The female role/rule book in Act One, Scene One is acquired through the television movies, television commercials, actress and actors, the Supermarket, *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and role playing games. In Act One , Scene Two, they are acquired through in-house psychology experiments, women's studies classes, *Vogue* magazine, and S&M games. In Act Two, the characters themselves who define the characteristics of female roles.

Sqrieux-de-Dieu is Lambert's first attempt at writing for the adult stage, and because the play was her inaugural piece, it has some brilliance and also some shortcomings. Lambert tries to do too much with this play. Lambert has eight characters involved in one character's journey, but does not have the time to develop them all fully.

Lambert also seems to be experimenting with what makes a play 'male' or 'female'. It has been said that 'male' plays are linear in terms of its plot progression and 'female' plays are non-linear. Although Lambert's plot seems to be linear on the surface, her theme, which is conveyed fundamentally by her characters tends to dispel this belief. Although the action of the play is complete at the end, it is suggested the action will repeat itself all over again in a circular manner in the future; the plot seems never-ending. The female characters have exchanged roles, but the nature of those

roles has not changed. There is a circularity to the action much like there is in Mother Nature; some things die and there are other things to take their place. This theme is only hinted at in Sqrieux-de-Dieu but will re-appear in her next play Jennie's Story in greater depth.

Godfrey, in his review of Sqrieux-de-Dieu, stated that the play "falls somewhere between being a period piece and simply outdated"[58]. In retrospect, the play is filled with 1970's cliches. In the scary times of A.I.D.S., multiple sex partners are deadly. The play still offers the 1990's feminist a lesson. For as long as society remains patriarchally driven, women will continue to analyze their role in relationship to that society and, therefore, in relationship to men. Women will continue to examine and struggle with their roles, their sexuality and the limitations of these.

This is not a feminist play in the traditional sense of 1970's feminism. It goes beyond that. Some feminist groups have their own set of rigid rules on how female characters should behave or think or feel, and that, in and of itself, is stereotypical, if not unachievable. In the seventies and early eighties, feminism tried to be the encompassing group for all women. It is naive to think that one group can met the needs of all of its members, and perhaps this is what Lambert was scrutinizing. Although Lambert's female characters remain in traditional roles available to women, (probably not the sort of role models feminists would want for their cause), Lambert, at least, allows her female characters personal choice. The fact that they have this choice is more important than any actual choice. The choice is never judged as being

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[58] Godfrey E13.

good or bad, but open for the female characters to make. Lambert seems to be saying to the hard-core feminists, the critics, and her audience, "Take it or leave it." Maybe this is not the most politically correct play, but then, why does it have to be?

CHAPTER THREE

JENNIE'S STORY

> The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
> It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
> It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
> Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?[59]
>
> -Gerard Manley Hopkins

3.0 Background

In the latter part of 1979, Pamela Hawthorn, Artistic Director of Vancouver's New Play Centre, an organization instrumental to Lambert's development as a playwright, commissioned Lambert to write a play. This play was originally intended to be about the backstage life of a theatre dresser. However, this project did not come to fruition. The British play, The Dresser, was well known and Lambert no longer was interested in the topic.[60] Hawthorn reflected, in the introduction of Playwright's Co-op collection of Lambert's work that,

> ...[W]e agreed to put it in the bottom drawer and begin again. What finally emerged - in retrospect, a flash of creativity - was Jennie's Story ...[T]he play as finally produced was very close to its original draft. This process, if it can be called that, was indicative...of Betty's talent: an intense, emotional connection to the material that poured out; but oddly enough, for so an intellectual woman, an inability to do, or perhaps a real dislike,

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[59] Janet Irwin, Study Guide to Jennie's Story (Ottawa: National Arts Centre, 1985): 21.

[60] Hawthorn ii.

for the process of, rewriting.[61]

Jennie's Story was first produced by the New Play Centre at the Canadian Theatre Conference in Saskatoon in 1981 and was directed by Jace van der Veen. After the Saskatoon production, Jennie's Story was produced at the Waterfront Theatre in Vancouver in 1981. It later toured the country, had rehearsed readings at Canada House in London, England, and continues to this day to be Lambert's most produced stage play. In the introduction to the collection honouring Lambert's works, Hawthorn said, "It has since been produced many times and each production has brought forth an audience response commensurate with the emotional intensity of the play; a response to the levels of truth in the anger, joy, love and hate that it expresses. The fundamental strength of the play is that it evokes terror and compassion."[62] Lambert was often called an angry woman and indeed she thought of herself as such. Jennie's Story is Lambert's first stage play to address this anger directly. "I've always had trouble feeling free to express what I truly believe in. My anger deals with being a woman and being raised to believe my sexuality is dirty."[63] This is the main drive behind Jennie's Story. Once again, we see that Lambert deals with women who are struggling with their role, their sexuality and the limitations that these present. In this play Lambert takes a close look at three women, but in particular, Jennie McGrane. Lambert developed the idea for Jennie's Story from a story her own mother told

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[61] Hawthorn ii.

[62] Hawthorn ii.

[63] "Betty Lambert 1933-1983" 6.

Lambert when she was a child. Lambert recalled:

> I grew up with this story about a woman, a girl really, who had worked for the local priest in southern Alberta. On the advice of the priest, she went to Calgary for an operation, thinking she was having an appendectomy. Years later she married a farmer in the district, and they were very much in love, but she couldn't get pregnant. Finally she went back to the city to find out why she couldn't get pregnant, and she was told that she had had a hysterectomy, at which point she went home and opened a bottle of Armstrong and Hammer lye and mixed it up with some water and drank it. And killed herself...so when I came to write...I mean, it's always bothered me, it's something I knew I had to deal with one day. I mean the whole thing...the Catholic Church. She was obviously sleeping with the priest, and I couldn't figure it out. I thought he would surely have to have had some legal support to do a thing like that, so I started looking into the statutes on sterilization and they're horrific. B.C. was bad, but Alberta was unbelievable. In Alberta you could be sterilized - and by that they meant hysterectomy - for the transmission of evil, and evil was loosely defined as anything from pauperism to alcoholism, to feeble-mindedness. The figures are incredible, and this was not changed until 1971....Frightening, frightening. [64]

Lambert remarked that her ideas for a play come from real life problems that she is having, and that she extrapolates into characters. In the interview "Battling Aristotle" with Bonnie Worthington, Lambert states that the basic premise for Jennie's Story was told to Lambert by her mother. However, this idea of men controlling women's bodies is a recurring theme in Lambert's work, for example her novel, Crossings. As Lambert explained in the "Battling Aristotle" interview, "I was

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[64] Worthington 60.

obviously really upset by that story as a child, because it seemed to me that men could cut you out for being sexual. I mean literally eviscerate you (for being sexual)."[65] Lambert recalled a dream that deals with this theme.

> In the dream I walk into my bedroom and I see my grandmother lying in bed. At first I think she is dead, and then I realize she's alive but she's been eviscerated by my grandfather. And she's got her mouth open soundlessly and I say to my grandfather, "What is the matter?" and he says, "It's alright. I've cut her vocal cords so she can't scream and bother us." So I have two fears a) that my vocal chords are going to be cut so I can't speak or write, that's what that means to me, and b) that I'm going to be disemboweled, and [with overdramatic trembling] men are going to do it to me. [Laughter] Really terrifying. Men or the Church...My grandfather was a priest. He was excommunicated from the church, of course, for marrying my grandmother.[66]

Headlines in the Edmonton Journal in 1993, read: "Alberta Woman Was One of 3,000 Sterilized-Eugenics Common-Expert"[67], The Sterilization of Diane"[68], "Woman Sues For Children She Will Never Bear"[69], and "Bodily Harm".[70] All of the women referred to in these articles have stories similar to Jennie's and are as disturbing in their own right. However, the other piece of information that arises from

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[65] Worthington 61.

[66] Worthington 61.

[67] "Alberta Woman Was One of 3,000 Sterilized," Edmonton Journal 21 June 1993: A1.

[68] Don Thomas, "The Sterilization of Diane," Edmonton Journal 3 July 1993: A1.

[69] Deborah Pearce, "Woman Sues For Children She Will Never Bear," Edmonton Journal 3 July 1993: C1.

[70] Don Thomas, "Bodily Harm," Edmonton Journal 4 July 1993: C1.

these articles is, "In fact, the Germans (The Nazis with their idea of the 'Master Race') did not introduce sterilization laws until 1933, modelling them on legislation in Alberta, British Columbia and other North American jurisdictions."[71] In this horrific parallel, Lambert saw the potential for a dramatic and powerful play.

At the beginning of this play, an author's note that describes the Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act shows its significance for the play. Lambert says, "For the legal background of this play, see The Sexual Sterilization Act (Alberta, 1928), especially Section 5, which concerns "multiplication of the evil by the transmission of the disability to progeny". In 1937, just before the time of the play, an amendment was passed, making it possible to sterilize a person without his or her consent, provided consent was given by the appropriate relative or, if the appropriate relative did not exist or was not a resident in Alberta, by the Minister of Health."[72]

In the Study Guide To Jennie's Story which was prepared by Janet Irwin at the National Arts Centre Theatre Company School in 1985/86, the complete text of "The Sexual Sterilization Act" is included and is cleverly intertwined with a poetic passage of the play presented by Jennie describing the events that lead up to her sterilization. "The Sexual Sterilization Act, 1928" constitutes Chapter 37 of the Alberta Statutes. The following passage is an effective way of demonstrating how the elements of the play are so heavily influenced by the Act.

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[71] "Alberta Woman One of 3,000 Sterilized," A1.

[72] Betty Lambert, Jennie's Story/Under The Skin (Toronto: Playwright's Union of Canada, 1985): 14.

His majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta, enacts, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as "The Sexual Sterilization Act.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires -
a) "Mental Hospital" shall mean a hospital within the meaning of the Mental Health Act;

JENNIE: You came to my bed.
I was fifteen.
A man of God.

b) "Minister shall mean the Minister of Health.

3. (1) For the purpose of the Act, a Board is hereby created, which shall consist of the following four persons:

Dr. E Pope, Edmonton
Dr. E.G.Manson, Calgary
Dr. J.M.McEachern, Edmonton
Mrs. Jean H. Field, Kinuso

JENNIE: And one day you took me to a place. A place called Ponoka. And they asked me questions there. Four people in a room, they asked me questions. Three men and a woman.

(2) The successors of the said members of the Board shall be from time to time appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, but two of the said Board shall be medical practitioners nominated by the Senate of the University of Alberta and the Council of the College of Physicians respectively, and two shall be persons other than medical practitioners, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

4. When it is proposed to discharge any inmate of a mental hospital, the Medical Superintendent or other officer in charge thereof may cause such inmate to be examined by or in the presence of the board of examiners.

JENNIE: But you swore me to silence, and I said nothing.

5. If upon such examination, the board is unanimously of opinion that the patient might safely be discharged if the danger of procreation with its attendant risk of multiplication of the evil by transmission of the disability to progeny were eliminated, the board may direct in writing such surgical operation for sexual sterilization of the inmate as may be specified in the written direction and shall appoint some competent surgeon to perform the operation.

JENNIE: And then they wrote you.
And they sent you a letter.
And a paper to sign.

6. Such an operation shall not be performed unless the inmate, if in the opinion of the board, he is capable of giving consent, has consented thereto, or where the board is of the opinion that the inmate is not capable of giving consent, the husband or wife of the inmate or the parent or guardian of the inmate if he is unmarried has consented thereto, or where the inmate has no husband, wife, parent or guardian resident in the province, the Minister has consented thereto.

JENNIE: And you took that paper to my ma to sign.

7. No surgeon duly directed to perform any such operation shall be liable to any civil action whatsoever by reason of the performance thereto.

JENNIE: And then you came back,

and you said, 'Jennie, they're goingta fix your appendix and when that's fixed, you can come home. I'll be here you wake up.' An' then they put me to sleep. And you was, you was there I woke up. And then you went away again. And then you come to take me home.

8. This Act shall have effect only insofar as the legislative authority of the Province extends.

JENNIE: And you told me, 'Jennie, what we've bin doin' is a mortal sin, and we confess to God, and we got to stop.'[73]

Malcolm Page, stated that in " Jennie's Story, feminist anger at all the oppressions of women breaks out. No longer is Lambert restricted by either her own caution or by commercial considerations."[74]

3.1 Story

Reproductive rights have nothing to do with *morality* - they have to do with business, economics, medicine, and who really controls it all.[75] -Suzy Kerr (Act Up)

Jennie's Story is very similar in detail to the story Lambert's mother told her

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[73] Irwin 12.

[74] Page 3.

[75] Juno and Vale 158.

when she was a child, with the exception of a few embellishments on Lambert's part. The story takes place in rural Alberta during the late 1930's. Jennie and her husband Harry have been happily married for one year and while surrounding farms have been hit hard with misfortune, their crops and land are flourishing. However, although their land is fertile, Jennie is not. They have been trying for a year to have children, and, being good Roman Catholics, they want to procreate for themselves and for the church. Father Eddie Fabrizeau visits one morning after performing the burial rites for one of Harry's workers. Father thinks that he is cursed because everything he has blessed has brought misfortune or has died. Jennie and Harry do not really believe in this curse, but on some level are relieved that Father Fabrizeau did not bless their land or marriage. When Jennie and the Father are left alone, the audience finds out that they have a secret; one that is sinful and that the Father thinks Jennie has revealed. Jennie insists that she has not; and supports her assertion by suggesting that if she had told Harry, he would have killed the Father. It is now threshing time and still unable to conceive a child, Jennie begins to think that there must be something wrong with her, and decides to write to a doctor in the city; the same doctor who was there when she had her 'appendix' removed when she was younger. The doctor tells her to come immediately, surprised that Jennie is capable of writing a letter. Edna, Jennie's mother, looks after the homestead with the help of Molly Dorval, a 15 year old neighbour, while Jennie is gone. Edna does not want Jennie to go to the doctor for fear that she will really find out what surgical procedure was performed. Molly arrives to help with the cleaning and Edna insists that Molly use lye in her water because it cleans away

the filth. Even though Edna has taught Jennie to use lye in her wash water, Jennie has not used lye in the house for some time because it reminds her of a hospital. Once Jennie leaves for the doctor's, Edna bluntly asks Molly if she is pregnant. Molly, not wanting it to be true, confesses that it is true and that her dad is going to kill her if he finds out. However, Edna has plans for Molly's baby. That night Molly is upset about being pregnant and begins to cry. Harry hears her crying and thinking that Molly is homesick goes up to the bedroom to comfort her. With Edna beside them in the bed, asleep, Molly tells Harry a childhood story which relieves her. When Harry says goodnight and kisses her forehead, Harry realizes that he has more than a fatherly attraction for her. In a couple of days, Jennie arrives home. She is a changed woman. She stands, refuses to sit and does not move. She is in a daze. She is stunned by what the doctor has told her. Father Fabrizeau had lied. Jennie does not say a thing. Jennie's perception of her worth, as demonstrated in her silence, is limited to her use as a procreator. Unable to stand the tension, Edna speaks. She tells Jennie that she had to send her to the priest's home because they had no money that winter and she herself could not go because she was not in her right mind. Edna also tells Jennie of her plan for Molly's baby; Jennie and Harry can adopt it. The stage directions indicate that Jennie "*has gradually, with growing horror*" (p.65), realized that her mother knew that she was sterilized before she went to the doctor. Edna claims to have misunderstood what she was signing. Jennie is incredulous. Edna tells Jennie that she "would've done anything to get you outa that place" (p.66). Jennie rationalizes that she was sterilized because she was never too bright. She fails to convince herself. Not being able to fully

comprehend what has happened to her, and refusing to accept it, Jennie slips into a deep depression. Jennie stays up in her room for several days and nights. Finally Harry asks Jennie to tell him who did this to her. Although Harry already knows, he wants to hear it from Jennie. Once Jennie tells Harry that it was Father Fabrizeau who had brought her to Ponoka for the operation, Jennie asks Harry to kill the Father and then to kill her. Harry refuses to do either and tries to convince Jennie that he still loves her and will always love her but Jennie is unconvinced. Several months have passed, and Jennie's mental state has evolved from depression to anger. She constantly badgers Harry to kill her, cremate her and bury her down by the river. One afternoon before Christmas, Edna and Father Fabrizeau drive over to talk to Jennie. Jennie, who has taken to her room as a sort of refuge, has decided to come out and confront her mother and the priest. The once sweet, even-tempered Jennie is now bitter and sarcastic. She hacks off her braid of hair and offers it as a gift to Edna, who sits there stunned and silent. Then with all the strength she can muster, Jennie verbally attacks Father Fabrizeau and forces him to adopt a confessionary stance, on his knees in front of her. When Father Fabrizeau confesses to sleeping with Jennie even after her sterilization, everyone in the room is flabbergasted by this revelation. After the confrontation, the stage directions indicate that Jennie calmly goes to the sink, "*washes her face,...takes a can of lye and goes out into the pantry*" (p.105). Harry is angry at Father Fabrizeau and asks him to leave but not before he blesses the house. Edna suddenly realizes that Jennie has just taken her life. Harry races to the pantry and carries out Jennie's body. Edna takes Jennie from Harry in order to prepare her for the

funeral. Father Fabrizeau informs Harry that he can not bury Jennie in consecrated ground and warns Harry not to bury Jennie down by the river because it is against the law. However Jennie's suicide does not end the play, as it might in some traditional plays. The final scene has Harry returning from prison, having served his time for burying Jennie illegally and greeting his new wife, Molly and their baby, Ben, with Edna looking on.

3.2 The Female Characters

> Thousands of years ago, Judeo Christianity wiped out the pantheon of colorful gods, goddesses, and "nature spirits" replacing them with a stern, whitebearded male patriarch known as "God" - a concept which effectively invalidated woman's status as citizen and potential decision maker in society. Then the patriarchal belief structure implanted the notion of a *body/mind/spirit* which held that the body was evil - the source of dangerous, lustful impulses and desires which corrupted the mind. Identified with *Woman*, sensuality, pleasure, emotions, the Devil, animals, and Mother Earth - the body was judged inferior and even regarded with horror and self-loathing...the second class status of women reflects the patriarchal system of contempt.[76]

In Jennie's Story, Lambert focusses on one individual who struggles with her sexuality and her role and the limitations on both of these within a patriarchal, religiously dominated society. Even the minor female characters have to face their own sexuality and roles, but not as intensely as Jennie. However, the minor female

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[76] Juno and Vale 4.

characters, Edna, Jennie's mother, and Molly, the neighbour's daughter who comes to clean, purpose is not to dwell on their sexuality and role or even the limitations of these, but to complete the spectrum of the mother role. Instead of focussing on the entire spectrum of traditional female roles as she did in Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert specifically focusses on the traditional role of mother.

Lambert also examines how sexuality is viewed from two different perspectives; individually and institutionally, and questions why sexuality is considered such a 'dirty' thing. Lambert not only questions this dirtiness, but also, how sexuality affects the roles of women. Lambert also takes a look at how women themselves contribute to these limitations of their sexuality and their roles.

Whereas, in Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert looks how women's roles are determined by their own stereotypes, by other people, and by outside forces such as *Cosmopolitan* magazine, *The Joy of Sex*, sexy television commercials, traditional values, the feminist movement in the seventies and women studies courses, Jennie's Story looks at how traditional rural society, the Church, and the government determine the roles of women.

3.21 Jennie McGrane

> We are still ruled by religious dogmas such as Christianity, which for centuries held that only humans - and ultimately only white males had souls - Women, savages and animals didn't (therefore we could enslave, kill or experiment on them in laboratories without a qualm.)[77]

Jennie is the main female character who becomes the focal point of this struggle to define the female role and personal sexuality. Jennie's character and the themes presented in this play are inseparable at times. It is hard to talk about Jennie's character without involving the themes.

At the start of the play, Lambert's stage directions indicate how Jennie is to be portrayed and gives the reader an insight into the character's sexuality. The stage directions read:

> *She (Jennie) stretches like a cat. She gets out of bed hurriedly, putting on HARRY'S slippers. Then she puts on HARRY'S kimono, which is too large for her. Her hair hangs loose about her head. It is fiery, almost red, and curly; tendrils escape like halo flashes. Although her hair spreads about her face like a halo, there is nothing of the madonna in JENNIE - everything she does is sensuous. She is a woman at one with her body* (p.15).

Jennie is also somewhat child-like in her behaviour. Edna and Father Fabrizeau, would call her simple minded. During the first few scenes Lambert purposely plays up Jennie's naivety to emphasize that one so innocent is vulnerable to such treatment by

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[77] Juno and Vale 4.

others. For example, Harry has had a successful farm season, and as a result, put electricity in the house. Not everybody could afford to have electricity at that time, nor even fathomed how electricity works. As Jennie descends from her bedroom and goes into the kitchen, the stage directions indicate that "*she looks at the electric switch, and then up to the bulb hanging from the middle of the ceiling. Emboldened, mischievous, she almost switches it on then, scared, does not*" (p.15). Not only does Jennie have this unsophisticated quality, but also she maintains the rigors of a more traditional role. For example, when Harry and Father Fabrizeau first come into the house at the beginning of Act One, Scene One, Jennie has been fixing the kitchen for their arrival. She goes into the pantry for cream, pie, and some tea, as Lambert's stage directions indicate, with "*no sense of urgency. For instance, she warms the teapot against her own body, liking the feeling of the heat, before she empties the pot and puts the tea leaves in. Now she gets a bucket from the cupboard under the sink, pours some lye in, gets a rag from under the sink*" (p.17). As Harry remarks to Father Fabrizeau, "you (are entering) Jennie's kingdom" (p.17). When Harry asks Jennie to sit down with them and enjoy some tea and a piece of pie, Jennie's traditional upbringing is even more evident. Jennie scolds, "No, my mother never sat down with her men, and I'll not start. I'll see to my dough" (p.20). Harry is somewhat upset by this and retorts, "In my house, Jennie, you can sit with the men !" (p.20). Jennie refuses to sit down and continues with her household chores. When Father Fabrizeau is left alone with Jennie in Act One, Scene One, we see Jennie in a different light. Father Fabrizeau speaks patronizingly to Jennie, and treats her as if she is a sex object and Jennie does not

seem to take offence at this. This is the first intimation of their past relationship. When Father Fabrizeau demands that Jennie recite the prayer that she said when she found out that Billy had died, he cuts her off and barks out, "Close yer robe, woman! That lye is ruinin' yer hands. They're all red and cracked" (p.27). When Jennie tells the Father that she worries for him without her to care for him, saying Mrs. Day, his present housekeeper, is old, and can't see dirt and therefore is not clean, the Father retorts, "Clean? You dare to talk to me about clean ? Close your Robe!" (p.28). He continues to nag at her. "Your hair's down" (p.29), he says. Jennie calmly replies, innocently, while starting to do her hair up in one long braid:

> Well, I allus took it out at night, Father. 'n' I allus braids it up hard 'n' tight in the mornin', ony, it gets out, it escapes me, 'n' matter what I do. Harry says it's just my nature, my hair leaps out like shining. (*small laugh*) There. It's back proper now (p.29).

Jennie's free flowing hair and the way she chooses to dress become symbols for her sexuality and her very nature. Jennie's hair represents her sexuality that is always escaping from her control.

Lambert also allows the audience to see the naive side of Jennie's personality throughout this scene between Jennie and Father Fabrizeau. For instance, when Father Fabrizeau thinks it is Harry who is spreading the word that Fabrizeau is a hoodoo, Jennie tries to defend Harry by saying:

> No, No, truly, Father. No...Harry ony says yer a scrouge...It's a good word, i'n't it ? Harry knows lots of good words. (*tastes the word*) A scrouge. A scrouge. It's what I say now, I go to the outhouse. "I'll scrouge you," I say. (*chuckles; pauses*) See, old Billy didn't want you, it's true. But Harry stuck up for you, he says, "No, Billy, we

> need the priest for dyin' and bornin' and marryin' even if he's a scrouge." So you see? Harry sticks up for you... (p.28).

In the above quote, the role of the priest is described as a institution in itself.

The audience is made to wonder why a priest would be talking to another individual in this manner. As in Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert is playing with audience preconceptions of how a 'role' should 'act'. Father Fabrizeau talking to Jennie about her sexuality seems inappropriately direct for a priest. The audience is forced to become active participants in this play when they are not given all the details of this relationship from the beginning. The audience is forced to wonder what must have precipitated this conversation. Lambert, once again, does not allow the audience to know everything and instead leaves a mystery to be solved. Instead, Lambert lays down clues for the audience. This tactic is evident in the next exchange between Father Fabrizeau and Jennie:

> FATHER: I'm a bad priest an'all for your sake.
>
> JENNIE: But that's all over now, Father. (*pause*) You said that was all over. I confessed and did my penance, so that's all over. Harry says you got to trust in God's infinite mercy.
>
> FATHER: Yes. (*pause*) You swore you'd never tell. You swore.
>
> JENNIE: 'n' I never!...
>
> FATHER: ...the oath of an imbecile is worth nothin'... (p.29).

Again, Jennie's naivety is illustrated when she tells the Father that she has done

her penance to God for her 'sin' and but still she is unable to conceive. So Jennie wonders if she cannot get pregnant because the Father had not confessed his sin yet.

JENNIE: (*nervously*) Father? The thing is, I done my penance, and I do trust in God's infinite mercy, ony nothin's still happening. So, now I got you here, could I ask, Father, if you wouldn't mind, I beg your pardon, but see, Father, it's been a whole year we're married, Harry 'n' me, and nothin' happenin' still, and see, I understand, like, when was doin' fer you at the rectory, but now it's Harry, see, and Harry's my husband. And so, Father, what I got to know is, have you confessed?

FATHER: What do you mean, you "understand" how it was at the rectory?

JENNIE: Well, how nothin' ever happened. I mean, that was God's mercy wa'n't it?

FATHER: (*bitter laugh*) You don't realize what you've done to me, you poor stupid woman (p.31).

The above dialogue is filled with bitter irony.

Lambert allowed the audience to see how a single personal attribute can be seen differently from two distinct points of view: one being the audience's and the other being Father Fabrizeau's. The audience must make up its own mind about Jennie. Lambert establishes in these early scenes that a professional board deciding who should be sterilized could be swayed by an esteemed member of society, the local priest. With the consent from her mother, which seemed to provide proof, Jennie was deemed feeble-minded and promiscuous and therefore in need of sterilization both for her own good and for the good of the community. We later find out that Jennie's was

sterilized not for her own sake but for the sake of stopping the "occasion" of Father Fabrizeau's sin.

In Act One, Scene One, Lambert has established her protagonist as a simple, naive, traditional prairie woman with whom the audience sympathizes. Jennie is also seen to be sensuous, attractive and at one with her body. Lambert, therefore, has established that Jennie has the two qualities, simplemindedness and promiscuity, and that was enough to convince medical board of the need for her sterilization.

Jennie's and Edna's relationship is explored in Act One, Scene Two. Although Edna tries to convince Jennie not to go to the doctor's, she can not stop Jennie. It is evident that Jennie is now a grown woman, and no longer subservient to her mother. Jennie fights for control in this scene with her mother and quite obviously Edna does not want to relinquish any. Edna actually slaps Jennie across the face when she thinks that Jennie has become too saucy with her. Jennie views her mother as being overprotective about Jennie going to the doctor's. The audience and Jennie find out later that the only one Edna is protecting is herself.

When Jennie finally arrives home from the doctor's in Act One, Scene Four, she is a visibly changed woman. As the stage directions indicate, "*Jennie seems a different person-frozen preternaturally quiet*" (p.59). When Jennie is spoken to, she does not answer at first. Lambert indicates in the stage directions that "*Everything is strained and silent*" (p.60). Jennie moves stiffly across the room but refuses to sit. The stage directions indicate that Jennie even "*lifts her teacup and drinks standing up*" (p.63). When Edna requests her to sit, Jennie says she'll stand. No matter what Edna

offers, Jennie does not want it. Jennie is visibly angry. When Edna confesses her involvement in the sterilization, the stage directions indicate that Jennie, "*continues to stare at her* (Edna)" (p.66). When Edna is done with her speech, Jennie manner has changed again. She now seems calmer and more emotionally controlled. The stage directions indicate that:

> *Jennie takes off her hat, which is attached to her coiled hair with a hat pin. She goes to the range. She lifts a lid with the lid lifter. She puts the hat in the fire, and then stares into the fire as it burns. Then she throws the hat pin in as well. She replaces the lid* (p.67).

Jennie takes back control of the house and asks her mother to leave immediately. After this point in the play Jennie is changed. She no longer wants to live and repeatedly asks Harry to kill her and the Father. However, Harry refuses to do either. She goes into a deep depression and takes refuge in her room. Her moods switch from depression to anger to hysteria. In the "Battling Aristotle" interview, Lambert gives her own view of Jennie's character.

> Lambert: ...she is not a completely evolved character. She is not at all a role model for women, because what she does is accepts. She doesn't see any way of breaking out of her world, and she turns the anger inwards.
>
> Worthington: She also feels she's a complete failure.
>
> Lambert: Absolutely.
>
> Worthington: And not worthwhile to her husband because she cannot bear children.

Lambert: Yes...[78]

Jennie finally finds the strength to break out of her depression when Edna decides to visit at Christmas time. Not only does Jennie get the final say with her mother, but also she briefly triumphs over the Father, in a scene that shows courage and strength in Jennie's spirit. After giving the Father a verbal lashing he admits to hearing confession while in mortal sin and this is the worst thing he has ever had to deal with as a priest. Jennie is incensed.

FATHER: It is not what I did to you, Jennie Delevault, it's what I did to God!...

JENNIE: Cuttin' me out and makin' me say it was a sin, that wasn't the worst?

FATHER: They were terrible sins, but not the worst, no.

JENNIE: (*close to FATHER*) Why have you come to me?

FATHER: (*kneels before her*) I have come to struggle for your soul (p.104).

The next series of stage directions indicate Jennie's emotional fervour over the Father's insolence.

JENNIE: Get up Father. I won't have you kneel down to me, Father, not for my soul. Kneel down for my body! (*presses his face against her belly*) There, there come to me, poor Eddie. Come to me and I will give you peace. Come to me, poor little Eddie Fabrizeau, never could learn to shut a

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[78] Worthington 62.

> cattle gate. Come to me. Come to me.
> Come to me (p.104).

Notice that Jennie refers to the Father by his name, and will no longer call him Father after this point. When Jennie states that Father Fabrizeau "could never learn to shut the cattle gate", she is suggesting two things. One, that he was not bright enough to be a good farmer, and two, he could never learn to keep his zipper closed. Therefore, he could never be a good priest. Jennie continues to re-capture her strength as the stage directions indicate that

> *FATHER's arms come up and he clasps her to him, JENNIE shoots a glance of fiery triumph at Harry. Now she turns to the FATHER, and pulls his head back by the hair, so that she is speaking to him face to face.*

JENNIE: Damn you to Hell, Edward Fabrizeau, damn you and damn your god too, and may your soul freeze in everlastin' zero at the centre of the world. There's nothin' terrible enough I can do, is there? Except that. Not to let you have my soul. I smell, do I? Yes. Smell me now. (*pulls his head against her, and moves against him violently*) Smell me now, Edward Fabrizeau. Dead flesh. Dead woman flesh. Dead fish in a dead river. Smell me now, Edward Fabrizeau, bad man and bad priest.

JENNIE pushes him away from her, not violently but almost gently, and she falls sobbing to the floor.

JENNIE: That's enough now.

JENNIE goes to the sink. She pumps water, washes her face. She picks up the water she has used before, takes a can of

lye and goes into the pantry (p. 105).

As Lambert explains in the "Battling Aristotle" interview, "she swallowed the lie about herself. Instead of saying, "Oh, to hell with it, we'll never go back to church, the priest is a prick, we'll adopt..."[79] Lambert continues to say about Jennie that:

> She (Jennie) is strong enough for a kind of brief wonderful flare-up where she tells the priest, and curses him. But once she's done it, she can't move out of it. It's complicated. She wants to avenge herself; she wants to do the priest in. She really very primitive - and the best vengeance she can think of is for him to have the curse of her suicide on his conscience for the rest of his life.[80]

3.22 Edna Delevault

> Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction. [81]
>
> -Pascal

Edna is never addressed directly by her first name in the entire play. Jennie and Harry and Father Fabrizeau refer to her as "Mother" while Molly Dorval, the neighbour who assists Edna in the housecleaning, and later marries Harry, refers to her as Mrs. Delevault. Edna is referred to only according to the role she plays in relationship to others. Edna first makes her appearance in Act One, Scene Two and in the stage directions, Lambert described Edna as a "*brisk, round woman*" (p.35) in highly starched house dresses that "*crackle and snap*" (p.35) and "*lisle stockings and*

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[79] Worthington 63.

[80] Worthington 63.

[81] Juno and Vale 224.

proper black lace-up shoes" (p.36). Edna is in her mid-50s and wears her hair in a braid that is kept neatly by a net. Edna has been brought up to believe that it is her position in life to look after everybody's home and its occupants. She has been on the farm for all of her life, and this is all she knows and believes in. She has been raised as a devout Roman Catholic, taught to serve the church in every way. This meant helping the priest with household duties, having many children, going to confession, or staying 'clean' in the eyes of the church. Because Edna was unable to work outside of the home, and it was a common practice to let a daughter be hired to do housework at other's homes, Edna hired Jennie out' for this purpose. This is how Jennie came to work for Father Fabrizeau. As a result of these beliefs, Edna is now struggling. She is struggling because her role as a mother conflicts with that of a faithful parishioner. As a result, Edna has to choose between her daughter's reputation and the priest's. At the time of this decision, Edna thinks she has made a choice that will protect both. However, she now realizes that her choice did not benefit anyone.

In the stage directions that introduce Edna's character, Lambert describes her as "*frustrated...but underneath she is afraid*" (p.36). Edna is upset that Jennie would leave to see a city doctor, during threshing time; a time when the woman in the house was supposed to prepare meals for the hard-working men in the fields. Jennie has instead chosen to go to the city to find out why she can not conceive a child. Edna shows her frustration by banging away at the pots and pans in the sink and by speaking in a gruff manner. The truth that lies beneath this scene is that Edna is afraid: afraid that Jennie will find out about her involvement in the sterilization and second, that as a result of

such a discovery, Edna will lose Jennie all together. On the outside, Edna appears to be domineering and cold; however, she is also vulnerable and frightened. Edna is a widow and has given birth to seven children, five of whom died before they were a year old: Ben, a son died in the mines; and Jennie. Twice in this scene Edna refers to her children who have died and protests that Jennie is all she has left. Edna pleads with Jennie not go to the doctor's under the pretence that the doctor might harm or kill Jennie in some way.

Edna is seen to be a very manipulative woman. She tries many different ways to convince Jennie not to go to the doctor. Edna first says that Jennie would be inconveniencing Mrs. Finlay, another of Jennie's former employees, by staying with her for so long. However, this attempt to stop Jennie has failed and she tries a different approach. Edna's second tactic is to attack Jennie's nature directly, by suggesting that she is a changed woman and that her leaving is selfish.

> EDNA: ...It's not in your nature to do this, Jennie. Not in yer nature. In threshin' time. You were always so...biddable. But now you get this bit in yer teeth and it's all self, self, self. I don't know you anymore (p.37).

Jennie explains to Edna that she is fulfilling the request of the doctor who had asked to her come see him, so she is going.

As a last attempt, as if she is giving up, Edna states that she is not touching the new electricity and condemns its use because "[its]...playin' with nature" (p.37). This is an ironic statement coming from one who would agree to the sexual sterilization of a

healthy woman without her consent.

Finally, Edna breaks down. Flustered, Edna reveals to Jennie that, "You never had no appendix...I never held with that. Tearin' off to that place, tearin' off for appendix" (p.39). However, Edna stops short of revealing all. Jennie misinterprets her mother thinking that it is another one of her mother's ploys. Should she tell Jennie the truth and risk losing Jennie; should she let Jennie be told by a doctor or should she hope that she will not be implicated even if Jennie finds out the truth? Instead of telling Jennie the truth. Edna resigns herself to the fact that Jennie is unstoppable in this pursuit and decides not to tell Jennie anything and hope for the best as she had done close to ten years ago. As we have seen with other scenes in this play and in Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert's characters each misunderstand what the other is saying or they purposely withhold information so that the truth is hidden or at least delayed. All attempts have failed to stop Jennie from leaving, so Edna desperately prays for divine intervention. Edna plead, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, don't send my Jennie to no doctor" (p.47). Edna is a devoted Roman Catholic, and believes that things do or do not happen because of 'God's will'. It is interesting and somewhat ironic that Lambert has Edna praying to Mary, Mother of God. It is like a plea from one mother to another, or a comparison between mothers. One mother witnessed her son's self sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and the other mother sacrificed her daughter for the sins of one priest. This latter idea is reinforced by Lambert in the script by having Harry referring to Edna as "Mother" with a capital 'M'. This is consciously written to emphasis this fact by Lambert. This is demonstrated in the following passage:

EDNA: Holy Mary Mother of God, don't send my Jennie to no doctor.

HARRY: Mother, they're not going to cut-

JENNIE: She keeps talkin' cuttin', why does she keep talkin' cuttin'?

HARRY: Mother, would I let anyone hurt our Jen?

JENNIE: It's the same doctor saved my *life* ! You signed the paper.

EDNA slaps JENNIE's face. JENNIE is astounded.

HARRY: Here now, you'll be spankin' my woman next. Way you two carry on, person'd think you was Black Irish.Mother? (*goes up to EDNA, puts his arm around her*). Mother? Now, the doctor's ony gointa look at Jennie, see why she don't start up. Now don't blush. Mother, a woman with seven children and you kin still blush. I swear, I think a woman gets a virgin every mornin' a her life (p.47).

Edna prays again to Mary, Mother of God, upon Jennie's return from the doctor's at the beginning of Act One, Scene Four. Edna crosses herself and recites the prayer "The Hail Mary".

> Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord be with Thee, Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. (p.58).

Although Jennie is in her twenties, Edna treats Jennie as if she were a child of twelve. For example, in a stage direction, Lambert indicates that "*Edna comes over, starts to fix JENNIE's hair, to push back the fly-away strands.*" (p.37). For Edna,

Jennie's hair is a symbol of her lack of control of her daughter's maturity and sexuality. Edna believes if one is clean in appearance then one is clean in the soul. Edna tries to tame Jennie's hair as if trying to tame her soul and maintain the control of a mother as she understand that role.

The scene between Jennie and Edna in Act One, Scene Two, which concerns Jennie's new hat reveals a lot about Edna's values and financial situation as well as the way she treats her daughter. Edna is very jealous of Jennie's new hat. One could say Edna seems somewhat spiteful. Edna says to Jennie as she shows off her new hat, "You oughta be ashamed of yourself. Four dollars and.. four dollars and fifty cents. It's ony a bit of straw and a bit of veil, I coulda made it for nothin" (p.39). However, when Edna finds out that the hat was bought at Mademoiselle Rose's, she is awed. Edna reveals, "I never even bin in Mademoiselle Rose's...I'd be scared to go inside Mademoiselle Rose's" (p.40). Edna, at Jennie's age, was not able to afford a hat like Jennie's, nor could she afford it now. Edna feels threatened that Jennie no longer needs her support as a mother. Jennie can take care of herself mentally, and physically and financially by Harry. Edna's role as mother and provider for Jennie is being challenged.

Edna is proud of the fact that she taught her daughter to be clean, to use lye in the scrub water, and to dry iron clothes. So when Jennie tells Edna that she no longer uses lye in her water, and that sprinkling is easier than dry ironing, Edna is shocked and once again is reminded that her daughter can now think on her own.

The relationship between Edna and Molly is explored in the latter part of Act

One, Scene Two after Jennie and Harry leave for the doctor's. As soon as Molly Dorval has entered the house, Edna puts her to work, reinforcing that she is in charge of this house and that the woman's place is working in the house. Molly is to do as she commands. Edna's forceful nature has returned. Edna is quite rude to Molly at first, and treats her as if she was an imbecile underling. However, when Edna tells Molly that she is to use lye in the scrub water, Molly retaliates and says that lye will ruin her hands. As Lambert indicates in the stage directions, "*MOLLY is not going to be a meek slave. EDNA grudgingly likes her for it*" (p.43). Their relationship, at first, is similar to that of a strict teacher pounding the lessons of good housewifery into a dutiful student. It is not until Edna guesses that Molly is pregnant, that she changes her 'attack' on Molly. When Molly finds no way out of her situation she sighs and says,

> MOLLY: I guess I'll hafta kill myself.
>
> EDNA: (*pause*) Fine Idea. Don't be a stupid girl, suicide's a sin, and you know it, yer a good Catholic. If you're a bad girl, yer still a good Catholic (p.53).

Being a good Catholic is more important to Edna than being a 'good' girl. As long as one obeys the laws of the church, one can be deemed morally correct. This faulty logic perpetrates Edna's misconception and hypocrisy. Edna uses or manipulates the situation to suit her own needs. We can begin to see how Jennie might have been 'sacrificed' for the sake of a priest. The church comes first, humanity second. In Edna's world, everything will work out, not because of humanity's good will, but because 'God works in mysterious ways'. Edna and the Catholic church are shown to be

equally hypocritical in their preachings.

Edna is a clever woman who is able to quickly change her strategy for achieving what she wants. Edna is a schemer. This is illustrated when Edna sits Molly down, offers the best cream for her tea, and tells Molly that she will, "...think it (Molly's pregnancy) out. You leave it to me" (p.53).

Expecting that Jennie is to arrive home from the doctor's, Lambert's stage directions reveal an interesting development in Edna's manner. Edna now speaks using the past tense "*as if Jennie were dead*" (p.57). For example, Edna says, "my Jennie used to hear things..." (p.57), and "My Jennie was like that. My Jennie could allus hear things" (p.57). It is as if Edna knows that the Jennie who left a few days ago will never appear again. Jennie died, figuratively, when she found out that she could not have children.

When Jennie arrives home, Edna is totally flustered and nervous. As Lambert states in the stage directions "*EDNA sits heavily at the table. She speaks downwards as JENNIE stands before her. It is a confession. She cannot look at JENNIE until just about the end*" (p.63). Again, Lambert uses religious imagery to enhance the irony; Catholics go to confession to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness and at least visually, this is Edna's confession. However, Edna never truly confesses. Instead she tells a sorrowful story about how hard that winter was for her: losing her husband, the farm, and then her youngest son, and how the snow seemed to bury the whole world and she was unable to reach the church. Jennie starts to feel sorry for her mother's hardship and takes Edna's outreached hand in a gesture of forgiveness. However, when

Jennie insists that Edna was not cut off as completely from the church as she made out, and swears that she sensed Edna in the church one evening while working. Jennie seems to be implying that Edna knew that the Father was making sexual advances on Jennie and that they were having sexual relations and that Edna could have physically stopped it. Edna starts to back pedal and states, "Well, it's past and done with now and no use cryin'" (p.65). Edna would just rather sweep things away and refuses to acknowledge her role in the sterilization of her daughter.

Jennie has not mentioned the results of her visit to the doctor's. Yet, in her excitement, Edna blurts out,

> God answered a prayer. See, the Dorvals is good stock, Jennie, French way back like us, 'n' Catholic, an'...the boy...well, the truth is, the boy's a Doukhobour. So see, what I was thinking, oh I forgot, you don't know how it stands with Molly. She's in a family way...'n' you 'n' Harry, you could adopt...Molly's...baby. (*pause*) I was prayin', prayin' for an answer. And in comes Molly. (p.65).

Lambert aligns the audience with Jennie in this instance because they both find out at the same time that Edna knew all along that Jennie was unable to have children. However, Edna still denies knowing what she was signing and continues to deny any knowledge of the events. Sensing that Jennie is not convinced and perhaps fearing that she will lose her if she does not tell the truth, Edna finally gives up and says, "All right, all right. But you was in that place. I would've done anything to get you outa that place...He said it was for yer own protection" (p.66). Edna is contradictory in what she says and does, and the implication is that the Catholic Church is also

contradictory in what it practices and preaches. Edna represents the embodiment of hypocritical theological teachings of the Catholic Church. Who is Edna trying to protect, Jennie, herself, or the priest? Edna's main struggle is, therefore, between being a good mother and being a good Catholic. Lambert is questioning how male dominated institutions such as the church puts limitations on the roles of women.

JENNIE: Maybe I'm not too bright. But I'm not the other..You were my mother !

EDNA: Oh dear God, blessed Jesus, he was a priest, Jennie !

JENNIE: 'n' you knew that too (p.66).

What was a mother and a devoted Catholic like Edna to do? Was she to allow these encounters between the priest and her daughter to continue? This is the question that not only Edna had to face but one that Lambert puts forth to the audience as well. The audience again acts like a jury passing a verdict on Edna's intentions and if they make her guilty or a bad mother. This whole scene resembles a court hearing and Edna is given a chance to tell her side of the story. So Edna decided to kill two birds with one stone. If she allowed Jennie to be sterilized, Father Fabrizeau might stop having sex with her daughter, and at the same time, if it did not stop Fabrizeau, at least Jennie would not get pregnant. For Edna, her daughter becoming pregnant by the local priest would have caused much scandal to her and Jennie and therefore would be the greater of two evils. This is exemplified when Edna states, "I couldn't let you have a baby by *him*!" (p.97). As Edna saw it, she was saving Jennie, saving herself, and protecting the priest all at the same time. This was the only solution for her. Edna

would deal with the consequences later and this resolution combined with her belief that God would make everything work out in His mysterious ways was her salvation.

Because of her confession, Edna is banished form the house by Jennie and is not seen again until the middle of Act Two, Scene Two. A couple of months have passed and it is Christmas time. Edna has come over uninvited and has brought Jennie a gift, a scarf, that she made herself from "Dora's Bob's Angora rabbits, 'fore they died off" (p.96). This is a clever and direct reference to Jennie's sexuality. As stated in the stage directions, Jennie, "*puts the scarf around her neck so it hangs like a vestment*" (p.96). The combination of the sexual reference of the rabbit and the gesture of hanging the scarf as a priest's garment is ironic. Jennie's gift to her mother is a braid of her hair that she has lopped off. Edna is speechless. Jennie comforts her mother by saying, "Don't mind, Mother, it's ony what they do to nuns" (p.96). With the scarf draping around her neck, Jennie says with bitter irony, "I forgive my mother. There all better now. I give her my hair, all braided neat and nice 'n' tight, like she taught me, to be neat, to be tidy, to be clean" (p.96). When Edna shows that she is still very upset , the stage directions indicate the following: "*[Jennie] takes the braid of hair from EDNA's lap. EDNA has not been able to touch it. JENNIE takes the braid to the stove and lifts the lid. She throws the braid into the fire and watches it burn*" (p.96). Jennie is destroying those 'feminine' things from the past that have restrained her. The once dominant, verbose Edna is silenced throughout the rest of this scene and it is not until Jennie verbally lashes out at the Father and brings him to his knees does Edna become involved in the scene again. Edna is the one who reluctantly helps the Father to his

feet. She is not sure of her ideals anymore. This is evident in the stage directions that follow when Harry demands Father Fabrizeau to be a proper priest and to bless the house.

> *FATHER straightens and raises his hand. HARRY kneels. MOLLY kneels. EDNA turns her back and does not kneel until almost the end of the prayer* (p.106).

Jennie takes her life after this prayer and it is Edna who realizes that Jennie has killed herself. It is interesting to note that the only thing that Edna says after Jennie's suicide is, "I'll wash her, Harry, I'm her mother" (p.107). Even if Edna is questioning her role as a woman in the Catholic church, she still is firm in her role as a mother. However, it is evident that she too questions this role.

In Act Two, Scene Three, the 'tagged on' scene as some critics call it, Molly has given birth to her son, Ben, and Edna and Molly are waiting for Harry's return from prison. There is a noticeable change in Edna's behaviour. Edna asks Molly if she isn't going to fix her hair. Molly replies that it is fixed. The audience would expect that this in not good enough for Edna. Edna simply replies, "Yes. Yes, you look nice, Molly" (p.108). After the mention of Harry going to prison for burying Jennie, Edna tearfully replies, "We gotta put that all behind us now" (p.109). Edna appears to have evolved and learned from her experience.

3.23 Molly Dorval

Molly is the one character who initiates action in the play. For example, she creates suspicion by mentioning that Father Fabrizaeu is her second cousin and that her family no longer goes to his parish because he is deemed to be cursed. Jennie fixates on this innocent revelation, almost in an obsessive manner, and demands that Molly explain herself. Edna, however, tries to divert Jennie's attention and practically pushes her out the door. Although she did not want Jennie to go a few minutes earlier, now Edna really wants Jennie to leave before Molly creates a new set of problems. However, Jennie demands an explanation and Molly, whose innocence is revealed in in her tales, tells the following story:

> MOLLY: My ma saya it's because he didn't go to confession one winter. It was snowed in. But he heard confession and he gave mass. An' he was in mortal sin. (*pause*) That's what she said Miz McGrane. But my da says it's just spite...he never married *her*, my da says Father Fabrizeau was really nice lookin' when he was young, and he says it's just spite, he married the Church into of *her*. (starts to laugh and then stops) He 's a tease, my da. Like Mr. McGrane. (p. 43).

Molly does not know who the female is in her story and neither do the audience at this point. However, the audience has witnessed the exchange between Jennie and Fabrizeau earlier in which the subject matter of Molly's story was hinted at. Molly only knows general details and does not link Father Fabrizeau to Jennie. Lambert's stage direction indicates that *"MOLLY senses she may have overstepped.*

She looks from EDNA's face to JENNIE's, then to HARRY's. HARRY has turned away from her, and stands stiffly at the door" (p.45). The audience discovers secrets about the characters, especially Jennie, in the same manner that the other characters do. For example, the audience is privy to the scene between Father and Jennie which suggested that Jennie and the Father had participated in something sinful. The audience is also aware of various reactions that reveal the character's inner emotions or subtext before other characters realize what is happening. The audience knows that Molly is pregnant before Jennie does. By this means, Lambert puts the audience into the play, and in a way, asks audience members to look at their own attitudes to such a circumstance. The audience is subtly recruited as jury in this situation, quietly reviewing all the evidence presented in order to enter a judgement of guilty or not guilty concerning the characters' involvement in Jennie's plight.

At the conclusion of Molly's story about Father Fabrizeau being in mortal sin, Edna asks Molly to leave. The stage directions indicate that "*Molly gets up obediently....Molly goes out* [Like a witness in a trial]. *She is on the porch for a brief moment as she looks about her at the neat clean prosperous farm, and is pleased to be here*" (p.47). Molly has no idea about what has just transpired before her. She is oblivious to the situation inside the house.

When Jennie and Harry finally leave, Edna and Molly are alone in the house. Edna has put Molly immediately to work, dry ironing and performing "*the age-old ballet of women folding sheets*" (p.50). Molly notices the electricity switch and is very intrigued by it and is not afraid of it at all. The stage directions indicate that Molly

"*switches lights, on, off, on, off* " (p.50) and exasperates "Gee! look at that!" (p.50). This is the most fundamental difference between Jennie and Molly. Although relatively close to Jennie's age, Molly is more adventurous while Jennie prefers the less threatening traditional conventions of daily life. This difference is also exemplified when Harry brings home a radio for Edna. However, it is Molly who is enthralled and awed by this new appliance. When Harry says to Edna, "But you'll never touch the knobs, I know!" (p.63). Molly responds, "I will! I can't wait!" (p.63). Even Jennie realizes this fundamental difference between Molly and herself. When Jennie goes into the kitchen, she "*gets the kerosene lamp from the top of the shelf beside the sink, and lights it*" (p.77). Apparently, Jennie has either forgotten that Harry has installed electricity and she no longer needs to use the lamp, or she is still frightened of using the switch. As a result, Jennie exclaims to Harry, "Oh! I did it again. You see what I did? I'm just not too bright, it's true, Harry. Molly, she's not ascared a bit. I don't know why everythin' strikes me funny....(*The sound of radio music, faint. Laughter.*) She'll (Molly) stay up all night, listenin'ta the ends a the world" (p.77). Molly has a idealized, romantic notion of what other parts of the country and the world are like. This is apparent when Molly first arrives at the McGrane's home:

MOLLY: That's a nice hat, you get that in Lethbridge? Mr. McGrane says yer goingta Calgary. I never even bin to Lethbridge I never bin farrer'n Lumbreck, 'n'Porcupine Hills. They don't count though....

JENNIE: Why don't they count, Porcupine Hills, why don't Porcupine Hills count, it's farrer'n Lethbridge?

MOLLY: Oh it's my uncle's place, Charlie Fabrizeau's? It don't count you go to yer relatives does it? I mean, it's not romantic nor nothin, just goingta yer relatives.

EDNA: Romantic! (p.45).

Although romantic in her ideals, Molly does show that her mind set is far more global or at least more regional than either Edna's or Jennie's whose mind sets are local. This could be due to the fact the Molly has more education than either Edna or Jennie. However, this is not to say that Molly should appear smarter than either of them. This is the point that Lambert tries to make in the following scene:

MOLLY: I guess you think I'm a bad girl now though.

JENNIE: Maybe you couldn't help yourself, 'cause yer not too bright.

MOLLY: (*defensively*) I passed my junior matric! I got confirmed!

JENNIE: *I* got confirmed.

MOLLY: I am too bright!

JENNIE: People allus said I wasn't too bright.

MOLLY: You! (*laughs at the absurdity of this*)

JENNIE *tries to normalize this new reality, tries to make it seem possible.*

JENNIE: Well, I never even got my grade seven. My dad started to get sick and I was taken outa school and went ta work for Mrs. Finlay up to Lumbreck. But I didn't mind because my teacher?....Mrs. Williston?...

> MOLLY *grimaces. She too has had Mrs. Williston.*
>
> She said I wasn't too bright anyways. My ma allus said that I was the way God made me...and I wasn't to blame...And Harry allus said it never made no mind 'cause I had rains else, but I never got my grade seven. (*pause; with great pain*) I shoulda got my grade seven.
>
> MOLLY *doesn't understand what* JENNIE *is saying, but she knows that something is terribly wrong* (p.69).

Lambert uses Molly's character to create an ironic situation, and in some ways, Molly is a means to an end. Molly is more a tool Lambert employs to comment on situations than a completed character. Edna comments on this point, "I was prayin', prayin' for an answer. And in comes Molly" (p.65). Lambert presents Molly as an innocuous, alluring, young girl who giggles at the slightest provocation, and who, at first, appears to fit the virginal archetype. However, as we have seen in the earlier play, Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert puts a twist on these archetypes which forces the other characters as well as the audience to re-examine their preconceptions. Molly, who is fifteen years old, is naturally experimenting with her sexuality. During her first sexual experience and due to her excitement and/or lack of knowledge, she becomes pregnant. Not only does she become pregnant, but she does not realize it until it is pointed out to her by Edna. Molly is unmarried, would not have the support of her family, and has no money to support a child if she had to live on her own. On the other hand, there is Jennie. She is happily married to Harry, their farm is prosperous, and as a couple, they desperately want a child for both personal and religious reasons. Although fifteen, and

in possession of a mature female body, Molly is still a child in many ways. Molly's sexual innocence is most evident in Act One, Scene Four when she is in bed with Edna asleep beside her. Molly is crying because of the knowledge that she is pregnant and the fearful prospects of her immediate future. Harry hears Molly crying and enters the room and sits on the edge of Molly's bed to try to comfort her. Harry thinks Molly is crying because she is homesick and asks Molly to tell him a story to keep her mind off her sadness. The idyllic story that Molly recounts demonstrates her naive, child-like innocence in terms of her sexuality. The story demonstrates a time in her life, a time that she can not go back to, where her naked body was as natural as the spring itself, void of the need to be hidden so as not to be seen as 'dirty' or the objects of men's desires. Harry asks Molly to recount a ..."best time you ever had, your whole life" (p.55). Molly tells the following story:

MOLLY: Well. Up at mt Uncle's place, Charlie Fabrizeau's? Porcupine Hills? They got a hot spring. My Uncle Charlie, he's got that all wired off so's us kids won't get at it. But we do anyways. It's lovely and hot and it smells like old eggs the hen hid and then forgot where she put'em.

HARRY *smiles, his eyes closed.*

(*encouraged*) My Uncle Charlie, he says that's the smell a the fiery pit, that's the smell a fire 'n' brimstone and the Devil's goingta drag us down by our heels, but that's just ta scare us off.

HARRY: But you aren't scared off.

MOLLY: Naw! See, it's ony an underground river feeds that spring, deep underground, down

> near the centre a the world, and it's bubbling and hot and steamy. My cousins 'n' me, we used to sneak up early mornings...(*snuggled down now; sleepily*) One time, one time we was there fer first snow, and we snuck up then too, and it was really somethin'. The snow comin' down and there we was naked, with icicles hangin' from our hair 'n' our eyelashes, and Jack's nose had this long icicle! (*small laugh*) An' all around us, the snow was fallin' and everythin' was so quiet an'still and we was warm. Naked 'n' warm.... I think my Uncle Charlie? He knew. I think he'd done it too, he was young...(*drowsy, dropping off*) Snow fallin' down and everythin' so quiet and still and us, all warm and naked.
>
> HARRY *waits a moment. He gets up, goes to her and looks at her. He covers her with the quilt. He bends down, and kisses her forehead. In that moment, he knows he feels more than fatherly interest for* MOLLY (p.55).

This story not only reveals Molly's child-like quality, but also reveals Lambert's subtle use of sexual imagery within the story. First, when Molly describes the odour of the hot spring as "lovely and hot...like old eggs the hen hid..." (p.55), this is suggestive of the female sexual odour. In the next section of the story, Uncle Charlie tells the children that the same 'smell' belongs to the Devil. This play tries to debunk the myth that the exploration or the demonstration of female sexuality is 'dirty' or bad, and therefore this reference to the 'smell' belonging to the Devil's domain reinforces the prevailing attitude the Catholic Church during the time that the play was written and set. Lambert might be asking the following question: although Vatican II made

sweeping changes in the Catholic church has anything really changed for women? The reference in the story to this smell also appears later in the text when Father Fabrizeau confesses to making sexual advances towards Jennie, he states his actions were because, "She (Jennie) was like an animal! Rubbing up against me. Singin'. Allus singin. She gave off an... odour" (p.103). Again, something that is as natural as bodily odour is seen as a fault of the woman and an invitation for sexual manipulation or advancement by a male who should not therefore be held responsible for his resulting actions. (This idea of a smell emanating from the female body is a major motif in Lambert's later play, Under The Skin.) The third part of Molly's story refers to an underground river that, "feeds that spring, deep underground, down near the centre a the world..." (p.56). This is also a hidden sexual reference. The notion of an underground river appears twice more in the play, and both times in reference to being pregnant. First, Molly claims that being pregnant is, "sort of like...a little fish...in a underground river" (p.69). The second reference to the river being associated with a woman's sexuality or the state of being pregnant is when Jennie confronts the Father. Jennie utters, "Smell me now, Edward Fabrizeau. Dead flesh. dead woman flesh. Dead fish in a dead river..." (p.105).

As Jennie becomes more and more disillusioned by the realization of her circumstances, Molly seems destined to replace Jennie in her role. Molly even inherits some of Jennie's character traits. For example, at the beginning of the play, Harry reveals that Jennie can hear things before others can, and knows events have occurred before others know. Harry says that Jennie, "is like an old pagan lady" (p.17). When

Jennie and Harry are returning from the city, Molly states that she has heard the truck come over the bridge. This discovery surprises Edna as she did not hear the truck. The power to hear things before they are visible is an indication that Molly is gradually replacing Jennie in the nature of things. Jennie panics and realizes that she no longer has these 'powers'. Harry first notices that the Father's car is coming down the road with Edna in it. Jennie declares, "I never heard it. I never heard no car. (with wonder) I never heard no car comin'! Harry!" (p.92). However, Molly who did hear the car, enters the room and warns, "Father's car is comin' down the road" (p.92).

Other earlier foreshadowing suggests that Molly would assume Jennie's role in this household. When Edna and Molly are preparing for Jennie's arrival, Molly sets the table with good china and comments that, "I want a pattern just like this, I get married" (p.59). Ironically, she gets her wish when she marries Harry. Another example is the scene when, after a long day of confronting the truth, Molly tries to comfort Jennie by suggesting that Jennie, "go on up and lie down fer a bit. I can handle everything down here" (p.71). The stage directions indicate Jennie's fate:

> *JENNIE looks at MOLLY and acknowledges this truth. She goes out into the hallway and we see her go into the bedroom. She stands there, a woman with nothing to do.* (p.71).

In Lambert's plays the women struggle with their roles and/or the limitation of these roles. Once the female characters can no longer live inside particular roles, either because they no longer fit the narrow definition of these roles they've created for themselves or because they are limited by these role definitions as created by a patriarchal society and institutions, they find themselves in crisis.

Molly is noticeably silent when Jennie confronts both her mother and more notably Father Fabrizeau in Act Two, Scene Two. Molly only says two things and they are said before Jennie comes downstairs for the encounter. However, these two things have important implications for the development of the plot. First, Molly is really excited to see Edna. She can hardly wait to tell Edna that the radio is working and she received Paris last night. Molly adds that Jennie "makes me use lye in scrub water again!" (p.93). Molly thinks that both of these things will make Edna happy. At first these statements may seem inappropriate to the audience considering the seriousness and the potential volatility of the situation. However, they are consistent with Molly's character. Molly's last statement about Jennie's use of lye in her scrub water foreshadows Jennie's use of the lye at the end of the play. It also explains why lye is once again in the house. This discovery advances the possibility that Jennie has been planning her suicide and the method of her suicide for a while. The second function of Molly in the scene is to get Jennie to come downstairs to meet with her mother and Father Fabrizeau. Harry asks her to, "see if Miz McGrane kin come down fer visitors" (p.93). Harry has to ask Molly twice to do this because she is so excited to see Edna and has ignored Harry's request. Finally, Molly leaves as she has been ordered to do. Molly knocks on Jennie's door and the stage directions indicate that, "*over the conversation downstairs*" (p.94), Molly asks for Jennie. This scenario is repeated two more times, while business is happening on the stage below, before Jennie actually answers that she is coming down. This delay in Jennie's response serves two functions. First, it creates suspense by leaving the audience to speculate if

Jennie is going to come down or not or wonder if perhaps Jennie might have killed herself since she has already mentioned that possibility and she is presently not responding to Molly's plea. The second is a more practical one. The time delay allows the actress playing Jennie to change her appearance and costume. Before Edna and Father Fabrizeau's visit, the stage directions indicate that Jennie's, "*hair is all about her face, wild. She is in a dirty flannelette nightgown, and the buttons are undone between her breasts. She doesn't put on slippers*" (p.85). When Jennie hears of their visit , she goes upstairs to her room without an explanation. Harry, Molly, and perhaps the audience assume that Jennie does not want to see them. However, it is obvious that Jennie had other plans because Jennie has changed her appearance. The stage directions indicate that Jennie now wears, "*a new flannelette nightgown, buttoned to her neck, long sleeves. Her feet are bare, her hair cropped off, and in her hands she holds a long fiery-red braid of hair*" (p.95). The time delay allows the actress and perhaps the dresser to put on a wig, since Jennie's hair is now cropped. Lambert creates a believable situation on the stage for this delay while at the same time allowing for the transformation to take place.

In Act Two, Scene Three, the final scene of the play, Molly and Edna are waiting Harry's arrival from prison. Molly has become ensconced in Jennie's former role. Molly now refers to Edna as 'Mother Delevault' rather than 'Mrs. Delevault'. However, Molly is not Jennie's identical character replacement. Character traits can be different within any given role, although the traditional definition of a role remains constant. For example, when Harry arrives home, Molly is surprised that she did not

hear his truck. She no longer has this gift that she once possessed and therefore she is no longer the woman that she used to be. Another example is Harry forgetting to take off his boots when entering the house. Molly tells Harry to leave his boots on; this is no longer 'Jennie's kingdom'. Molly still calls Harry Mister McGrane even though he is to soon be her husband. She corrects herself in her last line of the play, after having recited a poem for him, and asks him, "did I do it right Mist...Harry?" (p.111). Jennie has been replaced. Life goes on. The theme of the rejuvenation of Nature's life cycle is once again apparent, not only in the land, but also in its people.

3.3 Paganism versus Christianity - Mother Nature versus the Roman Catholic Church

In Jennie's Story, Lambert juxtaposes the natural world with its unrestrained beauty and naivete to a world which has been sterilized and controlled by outside forces - patriarchal institutions, such as the government and the Roman Catholic Church. Images of both these worlds are contrasted throughout the play creating bitter ironies as a result. These image pairs include Jennie's hair and vanity, Father Fabrizeau and Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry, the seasons and the religious celebrations, heaven and hell, Doukhobours, fire-folks and Christianity, freedom and imprisonment, pagan burial rituals and Christian burial rites. All characters in this play practise Roman Catholicism.

Bill Glassco, who directed Jennie's Story at the National Arts Centre in the 1985/86 season noted that,

> There are always some people who are going to say 'This is ridiculous, this is some sort of revenge on the Catholic Church.' I don't think you can avoid that kind of criticism.[82]

However, Lambert was brought up in the Roman Catholic tradition, and did not hide her sarcasm against and disappointment over what she saw as a hypocritical religion.

> Lambert: Infallibility of the Pope...I broke with the church - that is, they broke with me - when I was thirteen, for the sin of Pride. They told me they had done all they could for me. Well, they had. I had gone through the first confirmation class and I had balked at the Trinity. I couldn't swear to the Trinity; I couldn't understand it. And then they put me in adult confirmation class. It was really weird. I was a Sunday school teacher and the Junior Auxiliary Leader, and when it came to the Virgin Birth, I said I didn't believe *that* [laughter], and so they said that was it, they'd done everything they could for me and I had committed the sin of Pride. Good-bye. Took away my positions, which was just as well.[83]

Father Fabrizeau and Edna represent the obdurate edicts of the Catholic Church and the government, although the former is a greater perversion in this play than the latter. Both are so concerned with being good Catholics that they have lost their connections to the natural world. They will defend their belief in their religion above all else and for Edna that means putting the Church before Jennie.

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[82] Irwin 15.

[83] Worthington 61.

Molly, who "used to be in (Father Fabrizeau's) parish...but my ma won't go to him now, she says she'll never go...because he's cursed" (p.45), is the one character who is not firmly associated with either world at the beginning of the play. She has been confirmed, as every young Catholic girl but she is not as innocent as she first appears to be. She is pregnant, by a Doukhobour, out of wedlock, a predicament that is highly frowned upon, not only by society during the time of the play, but most especially by the Catholic Church and as Edna retorts, "Doukhobours's bad as Protestants" (p.52).

> (Doukobours, meaning) Spirit Wrestlers, were a sect of Russian dissenters from the Orthodox Church, many of whom now live in Western Canada, where they came seeking religious freedom. They reject church liturgy (believing that God dwells in each person, not in the church), secular government and war. They preach personal freedom and pacifism.[84]

Molly also has elements of the pagan world in her character as seen when she re-tells the tale of the best time in her life while frolicking in a hot spring fed by an "underground river...down near the centre of the world..." (p.56). Molly gives birth to a baby who is a mixture of both Pagan (Doukhobour) and Christian (Catholic) faiths and will marry Harry and continue life's cycle. Molly's final speech in the play is the poem God's Grandeur, by Gerard Manley Hopkins, ironically a Jesuit priest, who praises the wonders of nature. She has memorized this poem for Harry, the poem that Harry had once taught Jennie. Molly is the re-birth of Jennie.

Harry is the character who is firmly associated with both worlds, although

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[84] Irwin 23.

because these worlds are in conflict in the play, he questions his faith in the Church, but not in his God. Harry says about Father Fabrizeau's sexual attraction to Jennie,

> HARRY: What happened at first, it's ony nature. The Church says it's bad but it's ony nature. But what happened after, what he (Father Fabrizeau) did..., I can't understand how he did that. It's even against the Church...I can't understand him! I'm not God to punish him!...I think I can't be a Christian at all sometimes. I love the world too much (p.81).

It was during his time spent in prison for murdering a man that Harry came in contact with the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins celebrating the glory and wonder of God's nature. He taught Jennie these poems. Also in prison Harry learned to respect Nature and its freedom. He explains to Jennie that

> HARRY: When I went into that place (prison) and I heard that gate clang behind me, I thought I'd never make it, all those years without sky or dirt or to hear the river or the birds...God help me, I love the world Jennie. I love the world. I love it all, the thunderhead comes up all dark and purple and the still before it breaks, everything holding its breath, I love it though it'll flatten my field (p.80).

Harry also taught Jennie about the old fire people and their Indian rings and the awesome appearance of a great ball of fire, the sun, which has guided their existence from the beginning. He describes this in the following passage:

> HARRY: ...they was people livin' this place hundreds a thousands a years ago maybe. Before the Blackfoot, before the Peigan, before the Blood. Older people. The ones done them stone drawings down on Milk

> River...They was some kinda calendar, or almanac, I think. Sometimes I think a them people layin' out the stones ta tell time with. People living here in this river valley. Lookin' up at the stars. Waitin' out the cold. Waitin' fer the spring break-up. Buildin' fires ta keep warm.....It's the first day a spring, and I'm there, in the middle, lined up with one of them big stones, you know how they's four big stones placed just so, north, south, east, west? Anyways, I'm lined up, and the sun starts ta come up, and God! Jennie! The sun was lined up right over that damn big stone! I could see it comin' all around that stone, like rays. Like hair on fire. An' the stone, big an' black, holdin' it back, right in the centre a the sun, It was like lookin' inta the heart of the sun....I figure it must happen four times a year like that. I always meant to do that too, go back, in the summer, 'n' the fall, 'n' the deep a winter (p.90).

Jennie is the character who most exemplifies the natural or pagan world. Lambert describes her having hair that "*lays [sic] loose about her head. It is fiery, red and curly; tendrils escape like a halo flashes. Although her hair spreads about her face like a halo, there is nothing of the madonna in Jennie*" (p.15). Instead, there is a touch of a Medusa imagery. As Andrea Juno describes in the "Introduction" to Angry Women, the Medusa figure symbolically embodies women's anger.

> Reflective of the systematic destruction of matriarchal history by the patriarchy, the Medusa expresses *anger*. The complex, powerful pantheon of ancient goddesses such as the Medusa, Juno, and Artemis were reduced by their conquerors to narrow, negative, fearsome creatures. Medusa's rage, embodied in (her hair) by seething snakes that turned men into stone, seems to be an appropriate

> response to servitude. Anger is an emotion which must be reclaimed and legitimized as Woman's rightful, healthy expression - anger can be a source of power, strength and clarity...[85]

Jennie's savage hair, which represents her sexuality, becomes the point of contention between the 'natural' world and the 'sterilized' world. Ultimately, she is the object that the patriarchal world, represented by both the government and the Roman Catholic Church, tries to dominate and control. However, Jennie's rage is not legitimized and therefore ends up killing her.

Jennie's hair is the major symbol of Jennie's sexuality and her free spirit. It is free flowing, full of life, and bursting out of its braid. Both Father Fabrizeau and Edna try to tame Jennie's hair, while Harry sees it as her nature to have hair that shows exuberance and unbridled passion for life. When Father Fabrizeau visits Jennie at her home he remarks,

> FATHER: Your hair is down.
>
> JENNIE: (starts to braid her hair in one long braid) Well, I allus took it out at night, Father. 'n' I allus braid it up hard 'n' tight in the mornin', ony, it gets out, it escapes me, n' matter what I do. Harry says it's just my nature, my hair leaps out like shining. (small laugh) There. It's back proper now (p.29).

The above scene illustrates Lambert's subtle blending of Catholic Church's anti-feminist dogma and sexual imagery. The scene reveals how a woman's hair was

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[85] Juno and Vale 5.

viewed by the Catholic Church. Women were required to cover their heads in church because hair was seen as an adornment and therefore as a false god. It might also cause a distraction to other parishioners, not to mention the priest. The latter concern prompts Father Fabrizeau to make Jennie aware of this distraction. The blame for the 'distraction' is put on the women and not on the eye of the beholder, usually a man. As well, the scene stresses the fact that Jennie cannot be held responsible for her hair being the way it is because "it's just my nature" (p.29). Later in the play this idea is once again stressed by Harry who says,

HARRY: I like it you let your hair go loose like that.

JENNIE: I got long hair. I never once cut my hair.

HARRY: First thing I ever noticed saw you in church that Sunday. Never mind how she'd braided it tight 'round her head, I says, never mind, that girl's got lots of hair and it escapes her, no matter what.

JENNIE: I allus braided it to keep myself neat.

HARRY: But I allus gets away on you. It's not in yer nature ta braid your hair so tight. (p.91).

The stage directions indicate that Jennie, "*starts to braid her hair in one long braid*" (p.29). The image produced is that of a male phallic symbol. Therefore Jennie's hair also represents Father Fabrizeau's sexuality. Jennie says that she "braids it up hard and tight in the mornin' ony, it gets out, it escapes me, n' matter what I do" (p.29). This seems remarkably similar to Father Fabrizeau's predicament pertaining to his

sexual advances towards Jennie; even sterilizing Jennie did not stop the "occasion of his sin". Lambert makes reference to Father Fabrizeau's lack of sexual restraint in a metaphor when Jennie states that Father Fabrizeau "never could learn to shut the cattle gate" (p.104). The cutting off of her hair is like sterilizing or castrating Father Fabrizeau. At least symbolically, Jennie gets her revenge.

When Jennie cuts off her hair at the end of the play, Jennie says that "I kin go be a nun" (p.99). This line has many possible interpretations. First, nuns cut their hair to show humility to God, vanity being a sin. Nuns are celibate and, therefore lacking in overt sexuality. Perhaps Jennie wants to become a nun so as not to be seen as a sexual object. Second, because Jennie is sterile, she sees no other purpose or role available to her as a woman in this patriarchal society or as woman performing her duty to the Roman Catholic Church. At the time of the play, and to a large extent even today, women's roles were, and are, determined by their affiliations men. Because the Christian 'God' is generally represented as a bearded, older, white, male icon, 'He' is seen as the only male left to whom she can affiliate herself and therefore possess and maintain a role as a woman in that society. Jennie understands the roles available to women in her society. Jennie, very depressed about having been sterilized, says to Harry, "I want to die" (p.80)., "I feel so dirty" (p.81), "I hate the world" (p.80), "I'm not too bright" (p.81), "I'm no good for anything" (p.83), and "...You can't make love to me any more, Harry. I'm not a woman to you now...I'm your Hoodoo" (p.83). After having thought about the other female roles available to her, Jennie says, " I'm better now. I kin come downstairs now. I kin run yer house. I kin clean yer place. I kin cook

yer food. I'm bright enough for that" (p.87). But since Molly has occupied that role, the only female role Jennie sees left for her in that society is becoming a nun. However, when her religion lets her down, Jennie feels she no longer has a role or a life and hence chooses to end it.

Because Edna is a disciple of the Catholic Church in this play, she also tries to control Jennie's hair/sexuality. As Jennie is preparing to leave the house for the doctor's, the stage directions indicate that, "*EDNA comes over, starts to fix Jennie's hair, to push back the fly-away strands*" (p.37). However, at the conclusion of the play, after Jennie's death, Edna asks Molly if she is going to fix her hair because it is loose. Molly responds without touching her hair,

MOLLY: It's fixed, Mother Delevault.

EDNA: Yes. Yes, you look nice, Molly (p.108).

Jennie's hair is not the only pagan symbol or reference that aligns her to the 'natural' world. Throughout Act One, Scene One, Harry refers to Jennie as a 'old pagan woman' because of her ability to hear and know things before they happen. Harry says that the kitchen is 'Jennie's kingdom'. The kitchen is not only a woman's domain, but one that is earthly by nature, not heavenly. Also in Act One, Scene One Harry calls the Father a hoodoo, a person or thing that brings bad luck.

Jennie is also described in the opening stage directions as cat-like in her movements, "*a woman at one with her body*" (p.15). The notion of human beings as natural animals is prevalent in this play. In Act One, Scene One, Father Fabrizeau comments that "We are not animals" (p.27). However, Jennie responds, "Harry says

the best of us got some animal in us somewheres" (p.27). It is ironic that Father Fabrizeau says that he is not an animal, yet his actions do not support this view. His darker sexuality is animal-like but Jennie's sexuality is seen as mystical, free and at one with nature. In Act Two, Scene Two, when Father Fabrizeau is confronted about his sexual advances towards Jennie, he pleas,

> FATHER: She was like an animal! Rubbing up against me. Singin'. Allus singin'. She gave off...an odour. I couldn't get away from it even in the church! (p.103).

Felines, as well as other animals, will release pheromones, which are "external animal secretions having a taste or smell, or other characteristics that stimulate a behavioral or physiological response in members of the species that produce it."[86] Pheromones are most often associated with sexual activity. Since he states that this eventually leads him to make sexual advances on Jennie, and since only members of the same species can recognize these odours, Lambert aligns Father Fabrizeau with the image of a tom-cat. A few lines later, Jennie declares, "They spayed me" (p.103). This statement is very poignant. Spaying is the term employed by veterinarians to describe the sexual altering of a female cat or other female animal. Sterilization is the preferred terminology utilized by the medical profession when applied to the sexual alteration of a human being, regardless of sex. Therefore, Jennie's statement maintains the image of the female cat. Lambert poignantly makes reference to this procedure as being

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[86] Sidney Landau, ed., Doubleday Dictionary (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1975): 544.

animalistic when performed on humans, as well as, pointing out that the various terms employed to describe this procedure only differ semantically. The text, Angry Women explores the notion of women being associated with cats and illustrates why the imagery of Jennie as cat-like is appropriate for the context of this play.

> To protect yourself from sorcery by cats there was one, classic remedy: maim it. Cut its tail, clip its ears, smash one of its legs, tear or burn its fur, and you would break its malevolent power...The power of cats was concentrated on the most intimate aspects of domestic life: sex. Le chat, la chatte, le minet mean the same thing in French slang as "pussy" does in English, and they have served as obscenities for centuries.[87]
>
> - Robert Darton, The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History

The fire references in Jennie's Story are connected to both the Pagan and Christian elements in the play. Fire signifies cleansing, re-birth, the freeing of one's soul and a spiritual clemency when it is associated with Pagan elements in the play. However, when fire is associated with the Christian elements in the play, it becomes a pernicious force that destroys objects, takes away life or punishes one's soul eternally.

Christian allusions to fire in Jennie's Story are identified with the Devil's domain and punishment. At first Jennie is Christian in her views of Hell and its punishments. But this orthodoxy evolves into a pagan idealism. The play opens with Jennie saying a prayer for Billy, her neighbour who had just died.

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[87] Juno and Vale 227.

> Domine Jesu Christen Rex gloriae, libera anima omnium fidelium defunctorum de paenis inferni and from the deep pit. Deliver him from the lion's mouth, that Hell may not swallow him up and may he not fall into darkness, but may the holy standard-bearer, Michael, lead him into the holy light... (p.16).

Harry also makes Christian references to Hell, the Devil, and fire in Act One, Scene One when talking about Billy's death. Harry jokes,

> HARRY: Here Billy," says God, "what'd ya do, take a detour on yer way up? Devil singe yer butt? (p.26).

However, in Act One Scene Five, Jennie tells Harry that she wants to die, having lost faith in the Catholic Church and having discovered the glory in Nature's wonder. She first quotes a passage from Gerard Manley Hopkin's poem The Starlight Night, "Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies! Oh look at the fire-folk in the air!" (p.76) and then follows with her request,

> JENNIE: Harry, don't put me in the ground, I want to go like the fire- folk, burnin', burnin' like those old Fire People made the rings up on the butte. Take me down ta the river and cut me some kindlin' and let me go up inta the sky like fire-folk (p.77).

When Jennie does take her own life, Father Fabrizeau is quick to point out that he "cannot bury her in consecrated ground" (p.107) and suggests that maybe the United Church could bury her. Harry informs Father Fabrizeau and Edna that he will

> HARRY: ...take her (Jennie) down to the river, under the butte. I'll take her down to the river, 'n' cut her some kindling. And I'll make her a pyre, like they did for the old pagans....I'll not put you (Jennie) underground dark and

> lonely and cold. So when yer ma's made you ready, I'll burn you (Jennie). 'n' I'll do it when the sun comes up. And I'll stay and watch you like fire-folk. Into the skies (p.108).

The first allusion to fire as a destructive force in the play occurs when Jennie burns her new hat by throwing it in the stove. She does not explain why she decides to burn her hat. Her action is without justification, but it can be interpreted as a destructive act against materialism, her mother and the edict of the Catholic Church. However, when Jennie cuts off her hair and burns the braid, the act is liberating. Jennie exalts,

> JENNIE: I've bin talkin' crazy since Harvest. I was talkin' crazy just a bit ago. With Harry. I was talkin', Harry, go shoot him or shoot me, 'n' all kinds a crazy talk, Ma, 'd bring Harry to eternal perdition and everlastin' fire, but now I don't feel crazy. Cuttin' off my hair did it, I think. I feel free 'n' I can think....Molly Dorval, I give you to my mother who will have no more children and you kin be hers, reborn, in the fire 'n' the spirit. Amen (p.99).

At the end of Act One, Scene Five, after a frantic scene when Harry demands Jennie speak aloud the name of the man who sterilized her, and after Jennie demands Harry to kill both her and the Father, Harry is left alone. The stage directions indicate that

> *Now we only see HARRY. HARRY comes into the kitchen. He has been holding himself in. He goes to the range, lifts the lid, puts in more kindling, replaces the lid.*

Oh, Jesus!

> *He places his right hand down, hard, on the hottest part of the range* (p.78).

Harry burns his own hand not because he does not want to touch Jennie any more or because then he would not be capable of killing the Father, as Jennie suggests. He does it out of his frustrations and confusion between the clash of the Catholic Church's hypocrisies and his unyielding love for life and all it beholds. What has happened to Jennie makes Harry angry, but because he can not see how he can be angry at the world he loves, he turns his anger inwards. Harry punishes himself by deliberately burning his hand for his inability to act in either direction.

Jennie's concepts of Hell and God change as she becomes more aware of the hypocrisies of her Christian religion. She does not address Fabrizeau as 'Father' anymore, but by his birth name. She takes him out of his religious realm and back into the secular world. She also damns not his God, but his "gods". Jennie is not referring to gods in pagan religions such as Zeus, or Apollo, or gods in the Native tradition for example, but rather his 'false gods'; the priesthood, the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church's dogma, the government, the medical profession, his faith, his pride, and his sexuality. Lastly, Jennie wishes that his 'soul freeze in everlastin' zero.' She does not say, "I hope you <u>burn</u> in Hell" as would be expected, because for Jennie, fire has been a symbol of re-birth, cleansing, and warmth. After Billy dies at the beginning of the play Jennie says, "It's the thought a the grave, I think. So dark and lonesome. And cold" (p.27). Jennie also requests that Harry not put her in the ground when she dies but to burn her so that she can be with the fire-folk. Hence, for Jennie the worst thing

for Father Fabrizeau would be to be cold and alone, trapped in the centre of the earth.

The last major imagery for fire in this play is the lye. The lye is often referred to in the play as the 'burning' yet cleansing agent. For example, when Father Fabrizeau asks what that smell is in the house, Harry responds, "That's Jennie an' her damn lye water, always cleaning" (p.18). Father Fabrizeau comments that, "It must burn the hands" (p.18). Harry also jokes about putting lye in the water meant to wash Billy before his burial. "You (Jennie) di'n't put none of yer lye in this (basin), did ya?....Wouldn't want old Bill's skin burn off *afore* he gets to the Judgement seat. I mean, might prejudice the case, might predetermine the jury..." (p.26). Jennie no longer uses lye in her scrub water anymore because, "Lye's hard on the skin. It burns yer hands" (p.41). However, Edna insists on using lye in her scrub water because, "Lye burns away the filth" (p.41). It is fitting that Jennie chooses to end her life by swallowing the lye. She says she 'feels dirty' and therefore by taking the lye, she cleanses herself, burning away the perceived 'filth'. Lambert also suggested that it "came to mean l-i-e too; she swallowed the lie about herself and finally turned that anger in on herself."[88]

Ironically, the most Christian element in this play is the ending. The conclusion of the play does not come with the death of Jennie. Jennie dies at Christmas at the end of Act Two, Scene Two. At the beginning of Act Two, Scene Three, the stage directions indicate it is now Spring and Edna and Molly await Harry's return from prison. Easter is celebrated in the early spring in the Christian tradition and it concerns

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[88] Worthington 63.

the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is not a time of mourning for Christians but a time of celebration of a new life. Easter is a time for re-birth and with it, bestows hope for a brighter future. This is exemplified in the ending of Jennie's Story. The potentialities and the possibilities of a new, resurrected life are presented in Molly's baby and the future marriage. Life does go on and it continues without Jennie.

3.4 Conclusion

> The composition of a tragedy requires testicles.[89]
> -Voltaire (1694 - 1778)

The three female characters in Jennie's Story are struggling with their roles, their sexuality and the limits put on these by a patriarchal institution. Jennie's Story is a feminist tragedy. Molly struggles with her sexuality, Edna struggles with her role of mother, and Jennie struggles her sexuality and her role as mother. At the conclusion of the play one woman is dead, one is re-born, and one is resurrected. In Sqrieux-de-Dieu, the female characters struggle with their sexuality and roles within the context of a male-driven, modern metropolitan city amidst the feminist movement and female images which present themselves in the multi-media. By contrast, the female characters in Jennie's Story struggle with sexuality and roles within the context of a 1940's rural Alberta farming community which is heavily steeped in the Roman Catholic tradition. In Jennie's Story, Lambert decided to concentrate on a specific

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[89] Globe and Mail 3 June 1994: C1.

patriarchal institution that restricts and confines women to a particular kind of role and sexuality, the Roman Catholic Church. Although the main focus is on the Church's hypocritical teachings, Lambert indirectly criticizes the Church's 'right hand men', the Alberta government and the medical profession, for their involvement in the sterilization of innocent people.

Molly is a young woman who is naturally curious about her sexuality and the ways in which she can express her sexuality. Because of her sexual exuberance and/or lack of experience, she becomes pregnant. As a Roman Catholic, her pregnant state is a visually blatant disregard for the edicts of the Church; pre-martial sex is a sin. Molly thinks that the only solution to her pregnancy is to kill herself. However, suicide is against the Church's edicts and is a sin. If her predicament was not bad enough, she was impregnated by a Doukobour, who is the unseen arch-enemy of the Catholic Church, the Government, and Edna in the play. Doukobours were numerous in rural Alberta during the time frame of the play. They were against any form of organized religion or government. Molly struggles to become a woman in a culture that is heavily immersed in a patriarchal religion. Molly wants to explore other possibilities outside this society. This is evidenced by her involvement with a Doukobour and her excitement over the new radio Harry brings into the house which receives stations from as far away as Paris. All this external stimuli fascinates Molly and she finds herself wanting to be part of the experience. Also Molly exudes sexuality but it is not in the form of her physical presence as is displayed in Jennie's character. Molly's sexuality appears in the form of a story. Her innocent story about the time when she

went into a hot spring in the cold of winter, naked and frolicking around, is full of sexual connotations. Although, Molly is not aware of these connotations, Harry realises that his interest in Molly is more than fatherly.

Molly is the play's only static female character. Her character remains constant throughout the entire text and does not show any personal growth at the conclusion. Molly is also monodimensional. She has a few sets of distinguishing features such as naivete, immaturity, and a naturalness about her disposition. These characteristics do not change within the course of the play.

Molly's main purpose is to provide a comparison or a foil for Jennie's character. Molly and Jennie are close to the same age and both have an innocence and vivaciousness about their sexuality. Ironically, Molly is single, pregnant, and thus very fertile. Jennie is married, desperately wants a child, but is barren. In Sqrieux-de-Dieu, the female characters change roles and places with each other at the play's conclusion to everybody's satisfaction. In Jennie's Story, Molly takes Jennie's place in the family when she marries Harry and gives birth to her son, Ben. However, it is not a matter of the women exchanging roles, but rather of someone being able to fill the void successfully. Molly becomes what Jennie could have been. Molly is Jennie's potentiality and Jennie is resurrected through Molly and her baby. This metaphoric pattern expresses Lambert's theme of rejuvenation and her belief that life goes on despite death or a change in life's direction.

Edna struggles with her role as a mother and her role as a woman in the Roman Catholic Church. Edna agreed to the sterilization of her healthy daughter

hoping that the sterilization would put an end to Father Fabrizeau's sexual advances towards her daughter. Edna also felt that she was assisting Jennie by eliminating the possibilities of a pregnancy and thus averting a possible scandal within her community. At the time, Edna felt that she was making the correct choice. Now Edna is faced with a daughter who is wrathful towards her mother and Father Fabrizeau, who wants to kill herself because of her mother's actions, in sacrificing her for an insolent priest and in the name of religion. Edna is the female representative of the Roman Catholic Church and is inseparably linked to Father Fabrizeau and his wrong-doings. She is also linked with another prominent 'mother' in the play, Mary, Mother of God. When Edna does not know where to turn, she prays to Mary, as if praying from one mother to another. Before the audience meets Edna she is referred to by Jennie and Harry as being stubborn, gruff and a demanding woman who likes to get her own way. Edna's does not change within the course of the play. Pfister defines a monodimensional figure as having characteristics which are

> referred to immediately when (it) is mentioned for the first time. (Its) own utterances and remarks about (it) by others, merely serves to confirm this impression. Therefore they are largely redundant as far as the transmission of expository information is concerned, though of course this redundancy creates the comic effect of rigid repetition.[90]

This describes Edna very well. It is difficult to think of Edna as a comical figure because of the tragic nature of the play. Because of Edna's insistence of maintaining

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[90] Pfister 178.

dated customs and the redundancy of her manner, comic effects result not only for the other characters but also for the audience. Although Edna is largely a monodimensional and static character, she begins to change at the play's conclusion. As Pfister describes, "...figures in tragedies are often able - if not too late - to attain new levels of wisdom and new ideological positions. "[91] Lambert's theme of women looking for a future of hope, possibility and uncertainty is best exemplified in Edna's character.

The play is very much Jennie's story. It is her journey that we follow. Jennie struggles with effervescent sexuality. Her sexuality is presented as being as natural as the sun rising on the horizon or waking up in the morning. To Fabrizeau, Jennie's sexuality is 'dirty' and needs to be tamed. Fabrizeau presents Jennie's sexuality as fault of her's and as a sin and, thus, the very reason why she needed to be sterilized. Lambert had said that she was angry at being raised to believe that sexuality was dirty.[92] For Lambert, sexuality was something to be celebrated and to be shared with others. Jennie is the embodiment of Lambert's anger. Because of her sterilization, Jennie's dream of becoming a mother is no longer a reality. Jennie will never experience the role of being a mother. Jennie feels incomplete as a woman. She feels her life as a woman is over, literally, because she cannot bear children. Jennie struggles with her lack of a mother role and feels she no longer has a place in her community as a woman. She cannot bear children and cannot, therefore, fulfil the need

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[91] Pfister 178.

[92] "Betty Lambert 1933 - 1983" 6.

and requirement of the Catholic Church for procreation. Because of Jennie's lack of control over her own sexuality and sterilization, she becomes very angry. "Lambert probes beneath women's anger to examine dilemmas, moral implications, and injustices they have suffered."[93] Jennie was raised in a strict household where women did not sit at the same table as their men and where women acted in a genteel manner. Therefore, it would have been improper for Jennie to display any anger publicly. Jennie's anger is forced inwards. Naomi Wolf explains that some "women's anger (is) driven underground to smolder beneath its weight."[94] It is not until Jennie realizes that there is a world that exists outside of the confines of her earthly community that she challenges Fabrizeau's actions and the preachings of the Catholic Church. Jennie's new world is not Molly's exotic, far away world of Paris but rather a spiritual world which is larger in scope and freer in ideology. Ironically, in order to gain this personal freedom, Jennie chooses to kill herself. Lambert allows her characters to make their own choices void of being good choices or bad choices, just choices.

> Lambert: The audience kept wanting to applaud the moment Jennie was declared dead. That is the traditional mode of Aristotelian tragedy which was written by men. I wanted a new kind of tragedy - a woman's tragedy because I think that women know that death doesn't necessarily solve anything; that life goes on. Jennie's suicide is an answer - but it's not my answer. But it's typical of women to turn all that rage inward and destroy themselves - burn

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[93] "Betty Lambert 1933 - 1983" 6.

[94] Naomi Wolf, audio version, Fire With Fire New York: Random House, 1993.

themselves out.[95]

Jennie is denied the chance to use her own creativity to explore her sexuality and ultimately her role as mother. In Sqrieux-de-Dieu the possibility of role exploration is available to the female characters. In Jennie's Story, these possibilities are destroyed before the female characters can fully develop their potentialities.

Lambert explores how women, themselves, contribute to the limitations that are placed on their roles and sexuality. Jennie and Edna insist on maintaining the traditional roles of women as defined by their religion, their government, and their community. Edna's and Jennie's insistence ultimately leads to Jennie's death. Molly, however, has a life outside of these restraints. This 'life' may be an accidental rather than cerebral result. Everything that has happened to Molly is by accident or by nature, but not by conscience choice. Whether Molly maintains her independent spirit once she has a child and has married is unknown yet the possibility is there as a result of Jennie's death. Molly is still a member of a Roman Catholic, rural Alberta community. Its influence on the cultural standards of women are profound. Lambert's theme concerning the rejuvenation of life is evidenced by the play's conclusion and although there is a death, a new birth has taken place and with it a chance for a new beginning. Molly and her baby are part of that new beginning.

An important theme in the play is the contrast between the destructive powers of the patriarchal Roman Catholic Church and the encompassing powers of Mother

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[95] Jenifer Svendsen, "Tragedy: Women's Rage Turned Inward" Radical Reviewer 6 (Spring 1982): 18.

Nature. Images from both of these worlds are juxtaposed. The images that represent Mother Nature are of freedom and choice while the images that represent the Church are of imprisonment and limitations. Paganism is suggested as a healthy alternative to Christianity. Lambert may be suggesting that women should reclaim the Goddess within. Again, Lambert is ahead of her time in terms of feminist ideologies. Recently, there has been a great interest in some feminists camps to look back at pagan goddesses for their strength and serenity in order to suggest changes to the patriarchally driven society. Jennie decides that she would rather live free amongst the fire-folk (notice that 'folk' is a non gendered term) than trapped in the cultural standards set forth by her community.

McKenzie Porter, a critic from the Vancouver Sun wrote, "Author Betty Lambert asks us to believe that a mother of a 15 year old girl would consent to her daughter's abortion and sterilization simply to save the reputation of a Roman Catholic priest who was responsible for the pregnancy...If you can accept such a far-fetched plot, you will enjoy Jennie's Story."[96] Lambert noted about the response this play has received by male critics that

> They consistently say that Jennie was pregnant and had an abortion as well as the sterilization operation even though I had carefully stated that Jennie was not and never had been pregnant. In Canada, the tradition in literature about sex is that it is automatically equated with punishment and pregnancy. I found that male critics couldn't believe that we do indeed have a history in this country of punishing women who are seen to be

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[96] McKenzie Porter, "Strange Plot a Deadly Sin." Vancouver Sun 21 May 1983: 45.

promiscuous.[97]

However, today's headlines are filled with women and men who are coming forward to say that they have been sterilized unjustly, and with the problems that the Roman Catholic priests are having over charges of paedophilia in Newfoundland orphanages and elsewhere this plot is not at all "far-fetched." Jennie's Story is actually based on a true story. What is really frightening is that Lambert has given the ordinary a evil face. The beauty of Lambert's writing as Coghill points out is that Lambert brought ordinary Canadian stories beyond life itself.

On the surface, Jennie's Story is about one woman's struggle to come to terms with her sterilization. If one looks beneath the play's surface, it reveals how institutions can regulate, legislate and limit one's person freedoms and choices to point that it could kill someone's spirit.

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[97] "Betty Lambert 1933 - 1983" 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

THESIS CONCLUSION

Jennie's Story would not be Lambert's last stage play. Her next play would be one of the most raw and terrifying theatrical events to reach the North American stage. The unfinished work is called Under The Skin. Lambert wrote the play when she knew she was dying of cancer. Coghill revealed that Lambert continued to work hard at the play despite periods of blindness and sickness she endured as a result of her illness. Under The Skin, like Jennie's Story, is based on a true event that Lambert had read about in the newspaper. Because these plays are based on actual events, the subject matter is unbelievable and terrifying because it is 'real'. Lambert's prevalent theme of looking beneath surfaces of things in order to find out what ugliness remains hidden is fully explored in her last play. Lambert summed up Under The Skin by saying, "It's much more of a thriller, it shows how we try to ignore what is happening beneath the surfaces of our lives because it is much more comfortable to deny it."[98] Under The Skin is a very difficult play to deal with because the male character in the play is monstrously evil. John makes Father Fabrizeau look like a saint. Pamela Hawthorn said the initial audience of Under The Skin "all spoke of the unyielding intensity of the dread of the experience and yet, at the same time, the affirmation of human life that the play contains."[99] Under The Skin, although it is an unfinished work, gives us

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[98] "Betty Lambert 1933 - 1983" 7.

[99] Hawthorn iii.

an insight into the direction Lambert's female characters were heading and to the development of Lambert's theme. This thesis will not contain a complete analysis of the female characters or themes in Under The Skin, largely because it is an incomplete work and Lambert's full intentions are not known. Instead, this thesis will provide the story behind the play in order to support a framework for comparison purposes.

Under The Skin opens with Maggie's twelve year old daughter, Emma, missing and feared abducted. Maggie, who is an English professor at the local University, had recently moved into this neighbourhood and turns to her new neighbours, John and Renee, for comfort and consultation. Although at first it appears that the story is about Maggie and how she will deal with her loss (and to some extent it is), the play is Renee's journey into self-awareness and her willingness to look underneath the surface to face the ugliness that has been hidden. It is a story of her willingness to break free. Renee appears to be sympathetic to Maggie's predicament. Renee not always consistent in her support. Renee, with John's prompting, suggests that it may be Emma's own fault for being kidnapped because she was very sexual and promiscuous. The audience discovers that John is severely physically, emotionally and sexually abusive towards Renee. Renee suffers from 'Battered Wife Syndrome' which explains her behaviour and her willingness to defend John's actions and verbal lashings. John's behaviour is graphically depicted on stage in full view of Maggie and the audience. What makes this play more disturbing is that Maggie, especially at the beginning of the play, finds herself sexually attracted to John. Maggie's stature and financial status makes John extremely jealous. When Maggie finally tells Renee that she has to leave

John for her own sake, Renee believes that Maggie is trying to take John away from her. Maggie thinks she hears her daughter crying or screaming throughout the play and John insistences that Renee and her children are not to go into his workshop. When John finds out that Renee and the children have entered his workshop against his wishes, he becomes violently angry. The audience and Renee become inceasingly more aware that the possibility that Maggie's daughter is being held against her will in the John's secret room underneath the workshop. Lambert does not specify whether or not Renee knew from the beginning of the play of John's possible involvement with the kidnapping of Maggie's daughter or whether Renee's discovery develops gradually throughout the course of the play like the audience's. If Renee knew of John's dark secret from the very beginning then her personality is truly frightening. When Renee returns from the workshop, her behaviour is radically different. The audience is never informed about what Renee discovered in the workshop. Renee starts to speak more directly to John although the abuse continues. The final scene of the play takes place on Halloween night. John has told Renee that he read a book by Dostoyevsky that said "that only if you could rape a ten year old girl could you say you were truly free - free of all morality."[100] This disturbs Renee and when John decides to go into his workshop that night, Renee calls the police to say that she thinks her husband has gone there to kill himself. Meanwhile, Maggie visits and Renee asks Maggie to speak about her daughter. When the police arrive, they find no one in the workshop and they leave. Renee calls the dispatch and insists that the police come back because her husband is

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[100] Lambert, Jennie's Story/Under The Skin 176.

hidden underneath the trap door and she assures the police that John is there. Maggie has overheard this conversation.

> MAGGIE: (*turns and looks at Renee*) I hope you live a long time, Renee. I hope you have a long long life.
>
> RENEE: Forgive me.
>
> MAGGIE: Never (p.194).

The play concludes with Maggie leaving the house and running towards the workshop while Renee waits on the phone with the police.

The conclusions that can be drawn concerning the female characters and how they relate to theme and each other are remarkably similar amongst Sqriuex-de-Dieu, Jennie's Story and, as well, Under The Skin. By comparison, the three protagonists are domestic and their lives revolve around the homes. Brenda's, Jennie's, and Renee's stories actually take place in their homes and involve their husbands, relatives, and neighbours. Their domesticity is a vital part of these characters' existence. Their present homes are also places where they try to break out of in order to obtain their freedom; Brenda leaves her home in order to search for her identity outside of the four walls, Jennie kills herself to gain her freedom, and Renee calls the police to take her husband away from the house so that she will no longer have to be his slave. By contrast, they live in different periods of time: Brenda in the 1970's, Jennie in the 1940's, and Renee in the present. Lambert's theme of women struggling with their role, their sexuality and their limitations appears to be a timeless one. This is a key into Lambert's women. Jenifer Svendson remarked that Lambert's plays "do not tell us

where to go or what to do. Instead (they) tell us where we have been - and not so long ago at that...I think all women will (find parts of themselves in the plays) if they can stand to look closely enough."[101]

The other female characters provide reference points along the female archetypal role spectrum for the analysis of the protagonists. These secondary female characters are what the protagonist could have been, both positively and negatively. While some of the minor female characters represent what the protagonists could have been if limitations did not restrict their lifestyle, the other minor characters depict a life that the protagonist could have led if they did not challenge these limitations. The minor female characters are similar in terms of function and traits to each other and to the major female characters either in their own play or another one. For example, at the beginning of their respective plays Bunny, Edna and Renee all follow the teachings of a particular institution to the maximum, without ever questioning its teachings and preferring to remain within the comfort zones of their parameters. Susan and Molly are younger generation female characters whose sexuality is depicted as naturally elusive and demonstrative and who know how to use their powerful sexuality to their advantage. However, Jennie and Maggie's daughter, who never appears on stage, are blamed and punished for their own mishaps, literally by death, for displaying their natural sexuality. Gramma and Maggie seem to embody the roles of educators to the other women who are trying to show the protagonist the light at the end of the freedom tunnel. Maggie, Jennie and Gracie desperately want to be mothers but have

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[101] Svendson, "Tragedy: Women's Rage Turned Inward" 18.

no children of their own to fulfil their need. All of the secondary female characters are monodimensional and static in terms of their development in their respective plays. This description is not a weakness of character or a negative character trait, instead, these female characters may have already finished or commenced their journey before the play commenced or will begin their journey as the play concludes. The body of the script does not revolve around their journey. This exploration is reserved for the protagonists.

All of the female characters live within a patriarchal society that dictates the cultural standards for that society. In Sqrieux-de-Dieu, Lambert depicts a pseudo-sexually revolutionized culture dominated by traditionalism, the educational system, and feminism. The society in Jennie's Story is also dominated by traditionalism but is also combined with a heavily ensconced Catholicism. In Under The Skin, the society is represented by one male who terrorizes and patronizes women with his own order of traditionalism. The society's cultural standards play a major role in how these characters view themselves and ultimately how they are judged by others. The female characters try to live up to a standard that has been created for them. Until they question these standards do they gain their freedom. The striving for freedom is part of the protagonist's journey. Ironically, the problem is that these women's need for liberation is countermanded by their equally insistent need for security of role. The female characters in Lambert's plays are fighting for the freedom of choice with inherent limitations attached.

According to the Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, Feminism is defined as

the policy and practice or advocacy of political, economic and social equality for women.[102] In these plays, the female characters do not champion Feminist freedom and in some instances actually keep themselves 'barefoot and pregnant' because of their insistence to maintain the rigors of the traditional female role. Lambert is also exploring how women contribute to limiting themselves from developing as whole, physically, mentally, and sexually human beings and perhaps the imperatives that force women to do this are financial, emotional, historical or societal. Lambert may be suggesting that the future of feminism will lie in women's ability to unite, to be tolerate and/or accept other women's choices concerning their mode of displaying their sexually and in the way in which they choose to live their lives. The struggle and fight for freedom is not with each other but with agencies that put limitations on their lives. Lambert again proves that she was on the forefront of feminist writers during her lifetime.

The patriarchy receives some hard blows in these plays and this is perhaps why Lambert is called a hard-hitting (below the belt) feminist by her critics. However, Lambert's plays are not about the patriarchal institutions and their effects on the female characters as much as they are about how her female characters react against these institutions and their oppressions. This is what makes Lambert's plays feminist in orientation. The women are the focal point, although male domination, too, plays a vital role in her plays and without it her plays could not exist.

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[102] Bernard Cayne, ed., The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary Of The English Language Canadian Edition (New York: Lexicon Pub., 1988):

The theatre was very much a metaphor for Lambert's own life. Lambert fought against the limitations of the patriarchal Roman Catholic Church, the Canadian theatre and being a female playwright and all while trying to make a living as a woman and a playwright within this patriarchal institution. She succeeded in getting her plays produced by placing ordinary Canadian life on stage to be held up and scrutinized by all without ever preaching its ills or suggesting another course of action. She took the ordinary and made it extraordinary. She took the real and made it fantastic. What her audience decided to do about her messages was their choice.

Pamela Hawthorn wrote that "(She knew) that the work of (Lambert's) mature years would have been as noteworthy, and a further addition to Canadian drama. It is a shame that Lambert had passed away so early in her playwriting career. These works serve her memory well and prove that she plays a vital role as a feminist ground breaker in the Canadian theatre. Her legacy is Canadian theatre's best kept secret.

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Appendix One

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in Stratford, Essex county, England on July 28, 1844. He went to Oxford University from 1863-1867. He converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism and became a Jesuit priest. He was not known for his poetry until after his death and became popular when, in 1911, a collection of his poems were published. Hopkins "...combined mystical insight with a deep humanity. The tender, precarious beauty of childhood and youth, the lilies and thorns...of virtuous life, the pathos of dissolution and the hope of immortality."[103]

Three of Hopkin's poems appear in Jennie's Story. They are Pied Beauty, God's Grandeur, and The Starlight Night. Below is the complete text of each poem:

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things -
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon a trout that swims;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth, whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

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[103] W.H.Gardner, Introduction. Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press): xxv.

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, liking shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears mad's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The Starlight Night

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in the dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!

The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
Wind-beat whitebeams! airy abeles set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!-
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Buy then! bid then! - What? - Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with yellow sallows!
These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

APPENDIX TWO

The Female Tragic Form

Lambert had a more philosophical and literary, explanation for the final scene. Lambert wanted to battle Aristotle's theory on classical tragedy with its rigid rules of form. In the interview, "Battling Aristotle", Lambert tries to explain he quest for a new female tragic form.

Worthington: ...I didn't want the scene at the end...Because it is Jennie' Story, you call it Jennie's Story . I see why you have it, I think, because you're making a point about life going on.

Lambert: No, I wanted a new form of tragedy. I wanted to battle [laughter] Aristotle. In traditional classic tragedy, when Oedipus tears out his eyes, that's it....Women know something that maybe men don't know. We know that after death, somebody cooks bacon and eggs. And that suicide is not an answer, because life bloody goes on. And on some fundamental level I wanted to break the tragic code.

...I think the highly individuated classical tragedy is that lonely individual making that final lofty statement, and you end there with the sense of the defiant human being. A female tragic mode would indicate how, ironically, people pick up the pieces and start to make the funeral feast. You see, I feel suicide is really against nature, and that women know that; whereas men see it as an act of defiance against the forces and the fates.

...Tragedy comes out of ritual. It regenerates the land and brings fertility. But as tragedy became increasingly secular, the emphasis as placed more and more on the lonely male individual defying

> inexorable fate. It's really a fundamental question for me; is the tragic firm absolutely deterministic, does it determine the kind of truth you get out? Are you up against a statement that says life is shit, there are terrible dilemmas, all you can do is suffer with grace? I didn't want that, you see. I didn't want people to go out of the theatre saying, all you can do is burn your guts out. All you can do is take the lye and swallow it - But I'm not sure the final scene does what I want it to.

Lambert concludes the interview with:

> ...just aesthetically, is there a tragic form which dominates? I mean, is the classic form a natural form which imposes its demands on what you're writing? And then you have to think, well, if it is a humanly natural form, then maybe the form has more power than what I'm trying to do, and it may demand its own ending.